

The Westborough Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	136314
Local authority	Southend-on-Sea
Inspection number	395520
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Lead inspector	Brian Netto

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	613
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alec Jose (Acting)
Headteacher	Jennifer Davies
Date of previous school inspection	26 November 2007
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Brian Netto	Additional inspector
Miranda Perry	Additional inspector
David Turner	Additional inspector
Anthony Mundy	Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors sampled 26 lessons taught by 25 teachers. Of the lessons seen, three were jointly observed with a member of the school's leadership team. Discussions were held with senior and middle leaders, staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers, and different groups of pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and listened to pupils read and talked to them about their reading preferences. They looked at the school's self-evaluation and planning documents, external evaluations of the school's work, policy documents and pupils' work. Inspectors analysed 282 questionnaires sent in by parents and carers as well as questionnaires completed by a sample of pupils in Key Stage 2, and 53 completed by staff.

Information about the school

The Westborough Academy is a much larger than average-sized primary school. Over a third of the pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Many of these pupils are at the 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 disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, including pupils with statements of special educational needs, is above average. The number of pupils who join and leave the school at other than the usual times is well above average. The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. The school runs a daily breakfast club. Since the last inspection, the school has become an academy. Significant building work is taking place throughout this academic year. The school has received a number of awards including the International School Award and, in 2011, the 'Best Public Education Building' for its work on zero carbon redevelopment.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory school. It is not judged good because some inconsistencies in teaching result in satisfactory rather than good progress. However, leaders and managers are sharply focused on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- Achievement is satisfactory. Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage from starting points which are below age-related expectations. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils make satisfactory progress. Attainment at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is broadly average.
- The quality of teaching is satisfactory. It is improving but some inconsistencies remain in how well work is matched to the needs of all groups of pupils and how effectively teaching assistants are deployed. The curriculum makes good use of outdoor learning and effectively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well.
- The behaviour and safety of pupils is good. Pupils are respectful towards each other and to adults in the school. They say they feel safe and that they can turn to any adults if they have concerns. Attendance remains below average, in spite of the many strategies used by the school to reduce absence. Recent evidence shows that persistent absence is reducing as a result of these strategies.
- Leadership and management are good. All leaders and managers, including the governing body, are keenly focused on improving performance and tackling any areas of weakness. As a consequence, the quality of teaching is improving through a rigorous programme of monitoring and support, linked to performance management.

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?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good throughout the school, in order to improve achievement, by:
 - ensuring tasks are well matched to pupils' differing abilities in all lessons, including more-able pupils
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are appropriately deployed at all times to meet the needs of all pupils.
 - making sure marking and assessment clearly identifies strengths and areas for improvement and pupils have time to respond to the feedback given.
- Raise attendance to at least national averages by June 2013, by:
 - reducing the extended absences for the small number of pupils whose attendance falls below the national average
 - building on current strategies, including the use of existing technologies, to target pupils whose absence falls below national averages.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age. They make good progress so that they leave with knowledge and skills that are typical for the end of the Reception Year. Robust tracking of progress allows the skilled practitioners to provide activities to accurately meet their individual needs. The children receive good support to learn letters and the sounds that they make.

Most parents believe their children are making good progress. This view was not supported by the evidence collected during the inspection. Inspectors found that pupils make satisfactory progress through Key Stages 1 and 2. Attainment at the end of Year 6, in English and mathematics, is typically average though it was lower in 2011 because this year group began Key Stage 2 with lower prior attainment. Attainment in reading is broadly average in Years 2 and 6. This was confirmed when inspectors listened to the pupils read, looked at reading records, and observed guided reading sessions. These activities demonstrated that pupils use a range of skills to understand different texts, but a few lack the confidence to apply their knowledge of letters and sounds to read unfamiliar words.

Opportunities for pupils to make good progress are sometimes restricted when all pupils are asked to undertake the same task. Year 6 pupils worked on solving problems in mathematics, but the task was not challenging enough for the more-able pupils. Although good support was given to less able pupils by the teaching assistant,

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overall the pupils made satisfactory rather than good progress. However, in a Year 5 lesson that provided challenge and enabled pupils to work at a brisk pace they developed a strong sense of wonder and fascination, and made good progress in their use of scientific vocabulary. Inspectors were told by one pupil, 'We dissected a daffodil this morning. It was brilliant.'

Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, and also pupils who speak English as an additional language, all make progress in line with their peers. Well qualified teaching assistants provide good support for pupils who have special educational needs, in lessons. For example, pupils in Year 4 developed good understanding of basic measurement skills in a mathematics lesson due to the effective questioning of both teachers and teaching assistants, which challenged the learning. However, in some cases teaching assistants are not as effective.

Quality of teaching

Although many of the lessons seen during the inspection were good, illustrating the improvements that have been made, these have not yet resulted in pupils making sustained good progress. This is because some inconsistencies remain in the way tasks are matched to the needs and abilities of the pupils. The tasks in some lessons are not sufficiently challenging for more-able pupils to ensure they make good progress. Some teaching requires pupils to be passive for too long and learning lacks pace. In addition, skilled teaching assistants are not always deployed to best advantage to help pupils make faster progress.

Where teaching is good, resources and questioning are used well to support learning. In a Year 6 lesson, for example, the teacher made good use of the pupils' prior knowledge to challenge their understanding of the characters in Macbeth. Excellent resources helped to ensure that pupils extended their vocabulary, and good targeted questioning moved the learning on further for the more-able pupils. Good lessons are also based on effective planning and the use of different learning strategies to engage and develop pupils' confidence. This was the case when Year 1 pupils used the outdoor area for role play.

A scrutiny of marking across Key Stage 2 classes identified some inconsistencies in teaching and assessment. Good practice, in the detailed marking, feedback and setting of targets in Years 5 and 6, provided pupils helpful guidance on what they had achieved, and what they could improve. As a result, pupils were able to improve their work. However, this approach is not consistent across the school.

Pupils praise the variety of work provided by the curriculum, and were particularly enthusiastic about the after-school clubs and wide range of outdoor learning opportunities. Teaching and the curriculum provide good support for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Parents are happy with the quality of teaching provided. Inspectors judge that, although it is improving, it currently satisfactory.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour is typically good. Relationships across the school are a strength, and pupils are confident that all adults keep them safe. They describe teachers as a 'second family'. Parents agree that behaviour is good in and around the school. As one parent commented, 'Westborough genuinely puts children first and views each child as an individual.' Parents commented, during a coffee, morning that the school is a community of which they feel a part.

The school's strong inclusive focus integrates all pupils, and as a result different ethnic and cultural groups learn to understand and respect difference and work and play together harmoniously. An indication of this was the group of pupils who had taken it upon themselves to help others. Pupils are confident that adults deal quickly and effectively with the few instances of bullying of any type. Pupils are respectful of each and courteous towards adults and visitors to the school. They have a good understanding of risk, as demonstrated for example by their awareness of the risks involved in using a site undergoing considerable building work. Pupils are well behaved in lessons and show positive attitudes towards learning, especially where teaching engages and motivates them. They respond well to adult questioning, and cooperate and support each other's learning.

Although most pupils enjoy school and attend regularly, the overall rate of attendance is below average. The school uses extensive strategies to promote good attendance with some success in reducing persistent absence, but a small number of pupils are persistently absent. In addition some families take unauthorised extended holidays. At the time of the inspection, the school was unable to use information and communication technology to support these strategies, due to the work being undertaken on the building. This meant that sending text messages to parents and carers on the first day of absence was not possible, and phone calls were limited. The school gives good support to families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. This ensures they are fully integrated into the school community and promotes the importance of good attendance.

Leadership and management

The headteacher and leadership team lead by example. The growing proportion of good teaching is the direct result of their drive to increase its effectiveness. They have set performance objectives for each teacher that focus on improving the progress made by pupils in their classes. Training has been used very effectively and in a sharply focused way to develop teaching further. In addition, teachers are working in partnership with each other and with other schools to share and improve their practice. This drive for improvement is supported by sharply focused and ambitious plans and the commitment of staff, governors and parents. As a result, achievement has improved, gaps in achievement between different groups are closing, and standards in English are rising. Attendance is also rising, with a reduction in persistent absence. This illustrates the school's capacity to improve further.

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The leadership's drive for improvement is also reflected in the development of the curriculum. It is creative and innovative, and planning ensures that teachers fully exploit the outdoor environment, taking pupils to the beach or to explore forests to engage and motivate them to learn quickly. The curriculum is further enhanced by specialist teaching in Key Stage 2, opportunities for single sex classes which promote greater confidence and involvement for both boys and girls, and by a diverse range of after-school clubs. The outdoor curriculum ensures that pupils' attitudes towards learning are strong, and supports improved relationships. The pupils benefit from international links which widen their experiences. One parent said, 'Westborough is an ordinary school where extraordinary things happen.' The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted effectively.

The school's inclusive approach, which includes a strong commitment to tackling discrimination, is welcomed by pupils and their parents. Rigorous tracking of the progress of different groups means that there are no significant gaps in achievement between different groups. This illustrates well the school's commitment to equality of opportunity. The governing body provides effective and strategic support and challenge the school to perform well. They have a clear oversight of the school's priorities and effectively monitor the school's progress in addressing them. Safeguarding requirements are met.

Parent partnerships are strong. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire are positive about all aspects of the school's work.

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).

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.



16 March 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Westborough Academy, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 9BS

Thank you for your warm welcome when we recently visited your school. We enjoyed being told about all the good things going on at your school, and how much you enjoyed the clubs and outdoor activities which the school provides. We were impressed by the way you took part in lessons and always tried the best you can.

We would like to tell you about what we found. You go to a satisfactory school. The school has a number of strong points. You enjoy school and behave well in lessons and around the building. Your parents have a high regard for the school. The school is well led because the headteacher, teachers and the governors of the school work closely with your parents and carers to help you in your learning.

We have asked the headteacher and staff to make things even better for you, by doing the following:

- helping you make better progress by providing more lessons which are challenging, and activities which match all of your needs
- making sure that they give you good advice on what you need to do to improve, and provide time for you to demonstrate this
- ensuring that all of the adults in your classes are fully involved in the activities in the lessons, so you can all benefit.

You can help by making sure that you all attend school regularly and continue to behave well. I wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Brian Netto
Lead inspector

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