

West Thurrock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114906
Local Authority	Thurrock
Inspection number	357644
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2010
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	333
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dilip Jethwa
Headteacher	Susan Cook
Date of previous school inspection	20 November 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors, who visited 25 lessons taught by 11 teachers. The inspectors spoke with the staff, parents and carers, representatives of the governing body and groups of pupils. The inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' monitoring records, notes of governing body meetings, school planning and risk assessments. They also analysed the questionnaires received from the pupils, staff and from 43 parents and carers.

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

- Do pupils of all backgrounds and abilities make consistent progress through the school and what accounts for any variation?
- How have the governing body and leaders at all levels driven improved outcomes for the pupils?

Information about the school

Since it was last inspected, West Thurrock Primary has relocated into a new building and has moved from a one- to a two-form entry school. It is now larger than average. Just over half of the pupils are White British, a quarter are of Black African heritage, and others come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils learning English as an additional language is above the national average. An average proportion of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Mobility at West Thurrock Primary is high, with many pupils joining the school part-way through their primary education. The school has an Activemark award and has Healthy Schools status.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

This is a good school. It has been transformed almost beyond recognition and not just because it is now in a spacious new building. Several features of the school are outstanding, including the care, guidance and support, which play a key part in the pupils' feeling of safety, and their excellent appreciation of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary. This contributes to the harmonious relationships throughout the school, where children from different backgrounds mix, play and work very well together. The school leaders, the governing body and the staff team have together succeeded in creating a school where boys and girls of all abilities and from diverse backgrounds are keen to work hard and do well. In this, they aspire eagerly to the school motto: 'Only my best is good enough for me.'

The pupils attain average standards by the end of Year 6. This represents good progress in relation to the pupils' starting points, both for those who are at West Thurrock from the start of their primary education and for those who join the school at other times. Progress has been consistently good in each of the past three years, although it has generally been better in mathematics and writing than in reading. There is some uneven progress due to variation in teaching between different classes. In all classes, the teachers know the pupils well and the good relationships that the teachers have with the class contribute to the pupils' strong motivation to work hard. Behaviour management is a consistent strength of teaching throughout the school. It means that even pupils who join the school with behavioural difficulties quickly learn to settle and to follow orderly routines. The children in the Early Years Foundation Stage respond instantly to the teacher's chant, 'One, two, three: look at me.' Sometimes, however, the children and pupils are expected to sit passively for too long on the carpet, which can strain their attention span. Although, in many lessons, work is matched to the pupils' different capabilities, this is not a consistent feature of teaching in every class. The teachers ensure that all pupils are involved by asking them to share their thoughts with a 'talk partner', but too often they merely report back their own ideas rather than what their partner has told them. This misses an opportunity to develop listening skills further.

The pupils have a good understanding of their targets and what they need to do to improve. They enjoy the myriad opportunities that they have to take on responsibility, including as school councillors, prefects and house captains. They have involved themselves in local campaigns and take a lively interest in the wider world. In this, the good curriculum plays a key part. The pupils are proud of their progress in learning conversational Spanish and the annual residential trip to Barcelona for all pupils in Year 6 gives a practical application and aim to their studies.

West Thurrock Primary has changed beyond recognition from the school that lingered for more than five years in special measures with a record of long-term failings. The

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enormous improvements in virtually every aspect of provision and outcomes over the past decade and since the last inspection show how far this school has come. This has been achieved through the drive and ambition of the headteacher and leadership team. They have an accurate picture of the school and show that they are continuing to strive to further raise attainment and opportunities for pupils. Their success demonstrates the school's exceptional capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that, by the summer term 2011, pupils' learning and progress is accelerated further through:
 - matching the work in lessons always to pupils' different capabilities
 - ensuring that children are not expected to sit for too long on the carpet before moving on to other activities
 - making more effective use of 'talk partners' to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

From starting points that are below average, boys and girls make good progress over their time at the school. For some, particularly among those learning English as an additional language and among those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, rates of progress are exceptional. Careful tracking of each pupil's progress and well-targeted interventions to boost learning have led to an acceleration in progress through the school. Variations in rates of progress remain, however, linked to variation in teaching. The school has had remarkable success in engendering the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. This contributes strongly to their increasing achievement. In a Year 2 English lesson on instructional texts, the pupils volunteered suggestions eagerly as to how to correct the teacher's deliberate mistakes in the example she presented to them on the interactive whiteboard. There was palpable excitement when the pupils realised that they were going to go on not merely to write the instructions for making fruit pancakes, but would be following the instructions to make their own healthy snacks.

The pupils take a keen interest in the school and local environment. They have lobbied successfully for improved leisure facilities in the locality and they raise funds for charity, singing carols, for example, at the nearby Lakeside shopping centre. The pupils are proud to have had an input into the naming of the new roads on the housing estate being built on the site of their former school building. The proximity of the school to new roads and a site where building works are underway has given immediacy to the pupils' awareness of safety issues. The pupils have a very strong appreciation of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet. Many, for example, take part in the wide range of extra-curricular sports activities on offer. Attendance rates have improved since the last inspection so that they are now average, even though they are affected by extended holidays abroad and by absences due to religious observance. Although attendance and attainment in literacy and numeracy are average, the pupils' very positive attitudes to learning, the way they work together and their above average attainment in information and communication technology, mean that they leave the school well prepared for the next stage of their education.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

The teachers are especially successful in motivating the pupils to concentrate and do their best. This is most noticeable in lessons where work builds on what the pupils have learnt before and where activities are carefully tailored to the often widely different capabilities of the pupils in the class. Pace slows in those lessons where all are given essentially the same work to do and where activities are too hard for some and too easy for others. In the great majority of lessons, the teachers' questioning challenges and extends the pupils to think about what they are learning. This carries forward through much of the marking. The teachers often pose questions to the pupils when they mark their work, which provide helpful prompts for improvement. Often, these questions result in a genuine dialogue, with the pupils writing a reply which shows that they have taken note of the advice. This is not a consistent feature of marking, however. There are examples of some marking where the teachers' questions are largely rhetorical.

The new school building is very well resourced. It has, for example, given the pupils better than usual access to information and communication technology, which has had an impact on the quality of work in this subject. Initiatives to increase opportunities for writing and to boost the performance of boys have had positive impacts in raising attainment and eliminating the gender gap that is seen nationally. A push this year on guided reading for pupils of all ages is aimed at raising attainment in an area of learning which has hitherto

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lagged behind. In some classes, there has been less work so far this year in science than might be expected and there is an over-reliance in this subject on worksheets which sometimes constrain opportunities for more-able pupils, in particular, to record work in their own way.

The impact of the excellent welfare arrangements are evident in the pupils' strong personal development and their confidence in themselves and in what they can achieve. Rigorous systems to promote attendance and discourage avoidable absence have resulted in a sharp reduction in the number of pupils with persistent absence. Pupils experiencing difficulties are very well supported, each with an attached 'key worker'. They are helped to make similar progress to their peers. This is also the case for the many pupils who join the school part-way through their primary education from other schools in the country and from overseas.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Continuous improvement at West Thurrock Primary has been the result of a sustained drive led by the headteacher and leadership team. They have been successful in creating what the staff describe as a 'can do' attitude among the whole school community. The leaders are analytical in their approach, closely monitoring each child's progress in order to identify any pupil at risk of underachieving. Support is then given to help individuals and initiatives are also taken across the school to tackle whole-school shortcomings where these are identified. Initiatives to improve writing have contributed to a rise in attainment in writing and leaders have introduced further changes aimed at giving a similar boost to reading. There has been success in narrowing any gender gap and pupils from different ethnic backgrounds do equally well at West Thurrock Primary. This shows the school's success in promoting equality of opportunity. #the leaders' monitoring of lessons identifies where teaching can be improved, but the leaders' lesson observations have tended to focus more on the features of teaching than on the progress that the pupils are making.

The governing body provides good support and challenge. Governors point with pride at how far the school has moved on in recent years, but there is no sense of complacency or lessening of governors' ambition for further improvement. The governing body ensures that arrangements for safeguarding meet government requirements fully. The staff are especially vigilant about potential risks posed by the immediate environment, especially while building works are underway adjacent to the school site. The governing body's audit of the impact of the school's promotion of community cohesion is relatively thin, but there is much that goes on to broaden the pupils' horizons. The pupils learn about each other's

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faiths and beliefs and their mutual respect helps to make the school such a friendly community where all get on very well. They experience first-hand communities different to their own, including through an annual residential trip to a school in rural Devon.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
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	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

From starting points that are below those expected for their ages, the children make good progress to leave the Reception Year broadly in line with children nationally. This progress is mainly due to good teaching and good provision in a safe, stimulating environment. Resources are of good quality and are well deployed, both inside and in the spacious outside area, although the school has plans to develop this area further by providing more cover so that the children can still use outdoor toys when it is raining. The children's learning and development are carefully tracked and 'learning profiles' for each child record photographic evidence of their achievements. Any areas where the children have not developed as fast as they could are highlighted and activities planned to support their learning. In developing the children's language skills, for example, the staff give clear explanations and their questioning helps the children to develop their vocabulary. Learning activities are especially effective in promoting the children's social and emotional development. As a result, the children behave well and show respect for each other, sharing toys and taking turns. They follow the basic rules set by staff for staying safe readily, especially during snowy weather. Links with parents and carers are strong. Parents and carers express satisfaction at how well their children have settled and that they are happy and secure. The children's joy was certainly evident in the way they joined in excitedly on arrival in the morning, hardly waiting to get their coats off before dashing to an activity.

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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

Only a small proportion of parents and carers returned questionnaires. Of those that did, the great majority express positive views about almost every aspect of the school. A small number of parents and carers say that they would like to see the school take more account of their suggestions and give them more help in supporting their children's education at home. The inspectors found that there was good communication between school and home, for example about reading, including helpful guidance to parents and carers on how to listen to their children read. Several parents and carers wrote to the inspectors specifically to praise the approachability of the headteacher and staff. As one parent explained, 'They take time to listen to concerns and they respond promptly.'

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Thurrock 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 43 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 333 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	32	74	11	26	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	29	67	14	33	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	58	17	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	20	47	20	47	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	23	53	20	47	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	47	17	40	5	12	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	23	53	18	42	0	0	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)	13	30	24	56	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	18	42	21	49	3	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	37	23	53	3	7	1	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	16	37	19	44	6	14	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	19	44	24	56	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	56	19	44	0	0	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.

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 December 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Thurrock Primary School, Grays, RM20 3HR

Thank you for being so kind and helpful to us on our recent visit to your school. You told us how much you enjoy school and we could see why that is so. West Thurrock Primary is a good school. It is well run and there are some aspects of the school that are outstanding. These include the excellent arrangements for your welfare. We were impressed, too, with your very good behaviour, your knowledge about healthy lifestyles and the involvement you have in the school and wider community. It is because you all get on so well together that West Thurrock is such a happy, friendly place to be.

Many of you told us how proud you are of the spacious new building and the great facilities you have at your school. You benefit from good teaching and a stimulating curriculum and so you do well at West Thurrock, in the Early Years Foundation Stage as well as in Years 1 to 6. You do not do quite as well in some classes as others, however. We have suggested some ways of helping you to make even faster progress. We have asked the teachers to make sure that they do not give you work that is too easy or too difficult. This happens sometimes when everyone in the class is given the same thing to do. You can help the teachers by telling them when you find work too hard or too easy. We could see how much you like to get on with practical activities, so we have asked the teachers to be sure that you do not have to sit for too long on the carpet listening to lesson introductions. You often share ideas with your 'talk partner' and that is a good way of keeping you all actively involved in the lesson, but we have suggested that the teachers take the opportunity to ask you to report back on what your partner has said to you rather than what you told them. That will help you to become even better listeners.

Thank you again for welcoming us to the school and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector (on behalf of the inspection team)

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