

Westwood Community Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110641
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	356787
Inspection dates	28–29 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	347
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Martin Fields
Headteacher	Gillian Thomas
Date of previous school inspection	9 January 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector. Inspectors observed 11 teachers during 20 lessons. Inspectors met with teachers, support staff, governors, pupils and school leaders. Inspectors had informal discussions with several parents at the end of the school day. They observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, reports from the local authority, work in pupils' books and tracking data. Inspectors scrutinised the views expressed in questionnaires from pupils, staff and 63 parents.

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

- The degree to which rates of progress are improving throughout the school.
- The effectiveness of strategies being employed to raise standards of attainment and eradicate underachievement.
- The impact of leaders at all levels in driving school improvement.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average junior school that takes most of its pupils from the town of March. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to a free school meal is broadly average. Most pupils are from a White British background with a small but growing number of pupils from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is in line with the national average. The current headteacher has been in post since September 2008. The school has recently been accredited with the International School Award, Healthy School status and the Activemark.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

This is a satisfactory and rapidly improving school. It is a very happy school where pupils enjoy their learning and thrive personally in a caring environment. Pupils display mature behaviour and genuinely care about their school and their peers. Pupils' personal development remains a particular strength.

From 2007 to 2009, standards of attainment and rates of progress fell each year. In 2009, Year 6 pupils left the school with below-average attainment. Decisive leadership from the then new headteacher convinced staff and governors of the need to reverse this trend and, as a result of her actions and the determined efforts of teachers, the school is recovering rapidly. This success is largely due to improvements in teaching and learning, focused provision for groups of pupils who fall behind and the development of middle leadership capacity.

Work in pupils' books and the school's own accurate data show that pupils' progress is improving. Accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6 is helping pupils who have previously underachieved to catch up. The great majority of teaching is good and this is driving up standards of attainment. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on target to reach broadly average attainment and this represents satisfactory achievement from their average starting points. Pupils in the current Year 5 are in a stronger position again because of the improved teaching they have received.

The school has a very accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and, where there is still work to be done, credible plans are in place. Middle leaders understand their responsibilities very well. They work collectively with determination to drive improvements in their particular areas. A genuine desire to improve exists across the staff body and this is fundamental in facilitating the speed of improvements. Given these strengths and the improvements already made, the school's capacity to improve further is good.

A key change in the improvement of teaching has been moving from task-based teaching to focusing more on pupils' individual learning. Teaching staff are at different points in applying this concept, with a minority still planning their teaching around a task rather than the skills and knowledge pupils need. One consequence of this is that marking is not sufficiently focused on helping pupils improve their work. In some classes, basic errors are repeated for too long before being picked up and targeted for individuals. Marking is comprehensive but pupils get limited time to take on board the teachers' comments and suggestions. Opportunities for pupils to act on the advice given to improve their work are infrequent.

The curriculum is satisfactory with a good range of enrichment activities. The range of activities and opportunities that pupils experience is broad and pupils enjoy their learning. There is a limited shared understanding of how the curriculum fits together. This means

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that the opportunity to link and develop basic skills across different subjects varies considerably across the school. Likewise, in some year groups, not enough thought has been given to designing the curriculum so that all pupils are engaged and motivated by it. A number of parents and carers expressed frustration at the lack of structured homework being set. The school recognises this and, rightly, wants to ensure that homework is set in a way that is purposefully linked to learning that takes place in class.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the curriculum so that:
 - opportunities to develop skills and knowledge across different subjects are highlighted and developed
 - activities in all classes are thought provoking and engage the full range of learners
 - enrichment activities are used as a stimulus to further develop basic skills
 - homework is regularly set and linked directly to the learning that is taking place in class.
- Ensure that pupils understand what they are learning about and how they can improve their work by:
 - sharing learning objectives that are focused on the learning within a task and not on the task itself
 - giving individual pupils targets that are very specific in helping them to improve their basic skills
 - marking work in a way that shows pupils clearly how to improve it in relation to their individual targets and the learning objective
 - providing sufficient time during the school day, or as homework, for pupils to respond to marking suggestions by making improvements to their work.
- Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

While there is some variability in the experiences of pupils throughout the school, the majority of classes are vibrant and engaging. Pupils enjoy their learning and are keen to do well. Pupils are generally making good progress, particularly in Years 5 and 6. However, progress is slower in Year 3 and previous underachievement is not yet fully eradicated. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making progress in line with their peers. Pupils say that they enjoy the range of activities they take part in. They recognise that their school is getting better and usually talk about their learning enthusiastically.

Pupils feel that they have a real say in how the school works and talk about how their opinions have been taken seriously, for example, when developing the school behaviour policy. Pupils say that they feel safe in school. They say they know that they can go to an

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adult if they have a concern and understand that something will be done. Relationships are strong both between pupils and with staff. Pupils, in the main, behave very well around school and in class, although their attention sometimes wanders when lessons are insufficiently engaging. Pupils are polite, anxious to please and sensible. The school has effective strategies to support the few pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

Improvements in the quality of teaching and targeted support for underperforming groups and individuals are the major driving forces in this school's improvement. Teaching is now good in the great majority of lessons. A minority of lessons are satisfactory rather than good. In these lessons, the focus is on completion of task rather than on individuals making gains in their learning. This leads to less consideration being given to the particular learning needs and styles of groups and individuals. These satisfactory lessons tend to have a slower pace and pupils have fewer opportunities to contribute in a meaningful way.

In contrast, the good lessons seen were well matched to the range of learners' needs and abilities. Teachers discussed ideas with pupils and allowed them to explore concepts with increasing confidence. In these lessons it was clear that teachers had a good understanding of the range of needs and abilities within the class and set work so it stretched different groups in their learning. The curriculum in these good lessons was

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applied well with links between subjects being made effectively. However, whole-school curriculum planning does not provide the support needed by some teachers to provide the same high quality experiences.

Throughout the school, pupils are well cared for. Teaching staff are warm and supportive and pupils respond well to this. Systems to support pupils who are potentially vulnerable are secure, and the school works closely with a range of agencies and partners to make sure the pastoral and personal needs of individuals are met. Systems to support pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well developed and effective. Additional programmes are effective in helping groups and individuals catch up when they have fallen behind.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher has secured a stable base for this school to continue to improve. Middle leaders have a sharp focus on the need to improve outcomes for pupils and have led rapid improvements. Self-evaluation is accurate and drives the improvement agenda. Impressive improvements in provision are a result of the concerted actions of all staff in the school. Leaders at all levels recognise where improvements are still to be made. The school's action plan clearly points to effective strategies to continue to improve.

The effectiveness of the governing body is satisfactory. It plays an increasingly influential role in challenging the school and holding it to account for its performance. The governing body has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Systems for safeguarding pupils are effectively evaluated and rigorously enforced. All statutory requirements, including those for safeguarding pupils, are met.

Leaders are becoming increasingly effective at promoting equality of opportunity. Their actions, based on careful tracking, are well placed to reduce gaps in achievement for different groups within school. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to the promotion of community cohesion. It has a good understanding of its local context and has been successful in developing a cohesive school community. Pupils learn about different cultures and religions around the world. However, opportunities for pupils to learn about and from people from wider cultural and social background within Great Britain are not so well developed.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
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	3
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who expressed views stated that they are happy with their children's experiences at this school. A small proportion stated that their child was not making enough progress. The recent history of this school would support this view. However, rates of progress are improving and have been for a sustained period. Some parents and carers expressed concern about the lack of homework. The school's leaders acknowledge this and state that it is something they want to improve. Inspectors have included this as an area for development for the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westwood Community Junior 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 63 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 347 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	33	52	29	46	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	25	40	34	54	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	24	42	67	5	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	30	35	56	9	14	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	25	40	34	54	4	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	24	38	29	46	6	10	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	32	42	67	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)	22	35	36	57	2	3	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	21	33	36	57	6	10	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	13	21	40	63	5	8	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	24	38	60	3	5	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	29	46	26	41	4	6	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	23	37	33	52	2	3	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.



30 September 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westwood Community Junior School, March, PE15 8JT

You may remember I came with two other inspectors to inspect your school recently. This letter is to let you know what we found out.

We found that your school is satisfactory and improving rapidly. Your teachers and headteacher have the ability to make it even better.

We found that in many of your classes, teaching is good. You really seem to enjoy these lessons and work really hard. In some lessons you don't find the work as interesting and this is largely because the activities are not as exciting and challenging to you as they could be.

We have asked your school to make sure that the curriculum is really well matched to your needs and interests, and that it helps you learn skills like writing, reading, counting and using technology better.

We also found that your teachers do an awful lot of marking but you do not always do very much with this information. We have asked your teachers to make sure their marking is focused clearly on the things you need to improve. We have also asked that they give you a chance to improve your work once you have read what they have to say. This should help you make better progress.

I would like to finish by thanking all of you who talked with us during the inspection. We were really very impressed with your behaviour, manners and maturity. Your comments were very helpful and we enjoyed our discussions with you.

You have my very best wishes for your future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

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