

Westlea Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	126279
Local Authority	Swindon
Inspection number	364004
Inspection dates	12–13 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Sonja Joseph

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	299
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stuart Hogton
Headteacher	Suzanne Seaton
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons taught by 11 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and staff, and talked with pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. Inspectors examined questionnaires from 38 parents and carers, as well as those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- If pupils' attainment and rates of progress are even across the school, particularly for those who are more able.
- How well teaching promotes the progress of all groups, particularly those whose circumstances make them more vulnerable.
- The impact of recent curriculum initiatives to sustain and raise achievement for boys, particularly in Years 1 and 2.
- Whether senior and middle leaders, particularly in English and mathematics, promote high-quality provision to aid pupils' learning.

Information about the school

This school is larger compared to most other primary schools. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentages of pupils from minority ethnic groups, and those who are in the early stages of learning English, are in line with national expectations, but slowly rising. The proportion of pupils known to have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The school has a specialist resource provision catering for up to 10 pupils with physical disability. There is a privately run pre-school and after-school club on site, both of which are subject to a separate inspection. The school has achieved a wide range of external accreditations including Healthy Schools Plus status, Activemark, Dyslexia Friendly School Award and International Schools 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

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Westlea is a good school. It has some outstanding features which contribute to the distinctive character of 'including everybody' in the life of the school, and pupils thrive. Standards of attainment are rising; pupils achieve well and enjoy school. By the end of Year 6, they reach above-average attainment in English and mathematics. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those based within the specialist resource provision, make good and sometimes outstanding progress to keep pace with their peers and to overcome barriers to their learning. This is because of the well-targeted extra support they receive. Good safeguarding ensures pupils feel safe, knowing they will receive help quickly if needed. Pupils' high levels of spiritual, social, moral and cultural development ensure their behaviour is excellent and that they enjoy attending. Their excellent attitudes to school contribute to their generally good rate of learning. Pupils are very polite and show much consideration for the needs of others. Parents and carers express a strong appreciation of the quality the school provides. One typically commented, 'Westlea is an excellent school that puts the needs of pupils' education and well-being first. They truly care!'

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well. This rate of progress is generally maintained due to good, but sometimes uneven, quality of teaching across the school. Teachers use assessment information and marking with increasing effectiveness, though it is not always consistently well used in all classes to allow pupils to assess their own progress during or at the end of lessons. At times, pupils spend too long in responding to teachers' instructions or explanations rather than making a brisk transition to working independently. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to pupils' learning, particularly for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The outstanding curriculum, which often follows a thematic approach such as 'pirates' or 'railways', covers key skills effectively and promotes pupils' interest and enjoyment very well. Pupils report how much they enjoy the planned activities, trips, visits and experiences that the school provides.

The school is managed well and finances are carefully managed. The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides clear educational direction and a shared vision for development. Staffing changes mean that some middle leaders are new to their role, but are using new assessment systems effectively to monitor the progress of pupils. Their abilities in gauging the quality of teaching are not always sufficiently evaluative, however, to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and to guide further improvements.

The governing body provides a good balance of challenge and support, and plays a significant part in driving through improvements and shaping the school's future direction. The school's self-evaluation routines are largely accurate and include the views of pupils,

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staff, parents, and carers. These factors, along with the school's track record on raising pupils' academic attainment over time, indicate that the school has good capacity to improve.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching through the school by:
 - ensuring that the aims of lessons are made explicit to pupils to aid their learning
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to assess the progress within or at the end of lessons
 - reducing the length of introductions or explanations so that pupils can more rapidly undertake independent activities
 - ensuring that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are given more frequent help when they undertake independent activities so their learning is maintained
 - giving subject leaders more guidance in how to judge the effectiveness of others teaching to help improve pupils' learning further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils are confident, happy and courteous. They enjoy school and make friends easily. As one pupil commented, 'We all care for each other here', referring to their understanding of pupils with physical disabilities. They respect the rights of others, and their outstanding behaviour underpins their good learning and play. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their work, especially when activities engage and excite them. For example, pupils concentrated very hard when devising their own algebraic equations to record patterns of movement. Pupils of all abilities take pride in presenting their work well. They use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively as a tool to support their learning in a range of subjects. Children start school with attainment slightly below levels expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy, but by the time they leave, pupils' attainment is above average. Different groups of pupils, including the boys in Key Stage 1, make good progress, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Those with severe disabilities, who are catered for in the special resource provision, make good progress as their specialist needs are addressed carefully. Those for whom English is an additional language, and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, also make good progress due to the timely support they receive. While progress generally through the school is good, this is sometimes uneven between classes and year groups as not all teaching is yet consistently good. A dip in outcomes in 2010 has been successfully remediated so, for example in mathematics, the proportion of pupils achieving expected levels has exceeded the school's ambitious targets. There are now very few differences in the attainment of boys and girls.

Pupils are very aware of the benefits of exercise and what constitutes a healthy life-style, reflecting the school's Activemark accreditation. Activities such as cycling are fostered by a 'Bikeability' scheme, external sports links and after-school clubs which all promote high activity levels. Pupils feel safe and secure in school. They have a voice through the school council and they contribute to active playtimes as play leaders. They enjoy taking on

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positions of responsibility and pupils develop values of citizenship through their support of local environmental projects. They also raise large sums of money for local, national and global charities. Music and drama performances effectively raise the school profile in the wider community. By the end of Year 6, pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education and their future lives.

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	2
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	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	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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 large majority of teaching is good, but is sometimes uneven in quality. Good planning and the effective use of assessment information by teachers means that most lessons build well on pupils' prior learning, and this is particularly notable in Key Stage 2. In the best lessons, practical and challenging activities in which pupils have good opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with each other ensure all pupils make good progress in their learning. In a very well taught lesson based upon learning letter sounds (phonics) for example, a wide variety of activities made this a motivating activity, which pupils enjoyed. Teaching assistants fulfil a crucial role as part of the teaching team and contribute skilfully to pupils' good learning and progress, particularly for those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In those less-effective lessons, learning intentions are not clearly explained or related to lesson outcomes so that pupils know what to learn and whether they have achieved it. In some otherwise well-taught lessons, teachers talk for too long, leaving too little time for pupils to practise and apply their skills independently.

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Pupils talk enthusiastically about the practical activities they experience because of the school's outstanding curriculum. Pupils particularly recalled themed whole-school activities such as 'Grounds Week' where pupils relished the opportunities to use their skills of enquiry, problem solving, discussion and practical investigation to plan and devise improvements to the school environment. This was enriched by a range of visitors, videos made by all year groups, and e-books recalling events. Planning for the use of ICT within other subjects is also a strength, with pupils using laptops within activities as well as devising promotional DVD movies to entice parents and carers to the school.

An extremely welcoming and friendly atmosphere is clear to all visitors, parents and carers. This is because of the very well organised arrangements for the care and well-being of all pupils. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable are expertly supported. The early and accurate identification of their needs ensures that necessary support is provided through an effective range of school-based programmes and/or external support. There are productive links with pre-school settings and work with local secondary schools, which includes work for gifted and talented pupils. This helps make the transition to their new schools as smooth as possible. Parents and carers are very happy with the way in which their children are cared for and the majority are pleased with the level of access they have to information about their child's progress and welfare.

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	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Changes in the management structure have led to a greater shared drive for improvement. Training and research opportunities for staff in different subject areas have brought more focus in diagnosing strengths and weaknesses. Middle leaders are engaging more effectively in monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress. Senior leaders observe lessons regularly, but some evaluations are not sufficiently focussed on the quality of teaching, which hinders, more even improvement. The promotion of equality of opportunity is good. Leaders took quick action after identifying that boys' attainment in Key Stage 1 was lagging behind that of girls. As a result, the gap is narrowing. Pupils all have equal opportunity to take part in activities and the school does not tolerate any form of discrimination.

The school successfully draws upon the expertise of outside agencies to best benefit the pupils, particularly those with significant medical needs. It promotes positive links with parents and carers well through regular information meetings and the use of the website to gauge and respond to their views. Governance is good. Members of the governing

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body, ably led by the chair, have been influential in challenging the school about areas of underperformance. This led to the introduction of new assessment and tracking systems. Governors' good safeguarding procedures, including robust vetting of staff, ensure that pupils feel safe and enjoy school. The school acts promptly on any issues brought to its attention and is actively reviewing procedures to identify further improvements. The school promotes good levels of community cohesion and, as a result, pupils gain a good understanding of people of differing social, religious, and ethnic backgrounds, both locally and globally. Their awareness of those living in the wider United Kingdom, while generally secure through studying topics based on other locations, is a weaker aspect of their understanding.

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	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

Children get a good start to school. Most children start Reception with skills that are below expectations for their age. There are particular weaknesses in aspects of their communication and language abilities. When they enter Year 1, the proportion of pupils gaining the expected levels for their age has increased to broadly average. This represents good progress. Good partnerships with the local authority and parents and carers have a positive impact on children's progress in communication, language and literacy development. However, opportunities to develop purposeful play are less frequent and so development in this area is less successful. Children have access to a large outside area with many activities, although the wide diversity means that sometimes children lack focus in developing their learning. While adults are conscientious in supervising children, they are not always as skilful or prompt in guiding children's learning in order that they gain the full benefit from the activities they are choosing. Children have opportunities to use a range of new technologies and develop confident ICT skills using computers and programmable toys. Children develop an increasing understanding of healthy and safe

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practices. For example, one child knew and explained why there were covers on electrical sockets, 'It hurts you.'

Assessment procedures are well developed and good staff teamwork informs judgements about the progress of individual children. The needs of those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well ensuring they make good progress. The provision is well led and managed, and children are happy and cared for.

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

In terms of the number of questionnaires returned, the response rate was lower than is normally the case compared to other inspections. Almost all of the parents and carers who responded expressed highly positive views of the school. A high proportion of the questionnaires included very positive comments about the work of the school. These views could be summed up in one response, 'The best thing we ever did was move our children to Westlea.' This very positive view was also true of some of the parents and carers that the team met during the inspection. Inspectors endorse these positive opinions and consider they are a reflection of the effective partnerships the school has with parents and carers. A small number of parents and carers voiced a common concern about lack of communication, but during the inspection inspectors found that the school has the normal range of ways of communicating with parents and carers, including direct contact, open evenings, website and text service.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westlea Primary 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 299 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	63	13	34	1	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	24	63	13	34	1	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	25	66	13	34	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	22	58	14	37	2	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	24	63	14	37	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	21	55	16	42	1	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	13	34	24	63	1	3	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)	19	50	14	37	3	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	23	60	14	37	0	0	1	3
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	18	47	18	47	1	3	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	15	39	17	45	4	11	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	20	53	15	39	1	3	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	24	63	13	34	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 2010 and 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.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



14 July 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Westlea Primary School, Swindon SN5 7BT

Thank you for your warm and friendly welcome and for sharing your views on the school through talking to the inspectors and returning your questionnaires. We really enjoyed our visit. Your school provides you with a good education. These are some of the best things about it.

- Your behaviour is excellent and you make good progress from Reception to attain above-average standards in English and mathematics by the time you leave Year 6.
- The curriculum is outstanding and there are many exciting activities for you to do. We liked hearing about your 'Grounds Week', which sounded exciting.
- Your senior staff and members of the governing body are good leaders and managers, and all adults take good care of you. You told us that you feel safe and you have a good knowledge of how to lead a healthy life. You enjoy having lots of responsibilities, such as being on the school council.
- Teaching is good, if sometimes a little better in some classes than others, but your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting.

To ensure that your progress and attainment continues to improve, I have asked the headteacher to make sure that teaching is equally good throughout the school so that all of you make good progress in your lessons.

I hope all of you continue to work hard and enjoy your learning.

Yours sincerely

Sonja Joseph

Lead inspector

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