

Westgate Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118252
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	379575
Inspection dates	10–11 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Helen Hutchings

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	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Carole Bowes
Headteacher	Beverley Curtis
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 May 2009
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons taught by seven teachers and also observed assemblies. They held meetings with the Chair and a representative of the Governing Body, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work, and looked at planning documents, school evaluations, assessment information and pupils' work. In addition, inspectors received and analysed questionnaires from 48 parents and carers as well as those from a sample of staff and pupils.

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

- The sustainability of the significant improvement in pupils' attainment in the Year 6 national tests last year.
- The impact of action taken to identify underachievement and improve pupils' attainment, particularly in writing in Key Stage 1 and in the development of early literacy skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- The effectiveness of the school's work to improve pupils' attendance.
- How well the school's new leadership and management arrangements have established a whole-school direction for improvement and are giving the school the capacity to sustain developments.

Information about the school

Pupils in this average-sized school are ethnically diverse, with the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups who speak English as an additional language being above average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average, as is the proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is on the Dartford Learning Campus, which provides community facilities from nursery to adulthood. Early Years Foundation Stage provision is in a Reception class. Since the last inspection, the school has undergone significant changes in its teaching staff, and has experienced difficulties in recruiting teachers. At the time of the inspection, a vacancy in the leadership team was being covered by two teachers.

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****3**

Main findings

Westgate Primary School is a satisfactory school. Pupils have good respect for each other and behave well so that they feel safe. Because they work well together and willingly embrace new challenges, they enjoy their time in school. Pupils say that they find their lessons fun because of the interesting things they do. The frequent changes in staffing in recent years has slowed the rate of school improvement. However, the steady improvement in pupils' attainment in the Year 6 national tests over the last three years reflects the school's determination to ensure that pupils are adequately prepared for secondary education. The headteacher and governing body have successfully introduced a new management structure, which has resulted in a cohesive staff team with a shared understanding of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement. Self-evaluation is accurate and the right priorities have been identified for improvement. Well-targeted professional development is ensuring that staff, including those with new leadership responsibilities, are developing the skills to fulfil their roles. However, the school has not yet recruited to all middle leadership posts, which is limiting the impact of these arrangements, for example in providing sufficient time for managers to share effective approaches to achieving greater consistency in the quality of teaching. While many of the changes are relatively new and their impact is not yet apparent in rapidly improved progress for pupils, they show the school's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

Progress and provision is good in the Reception class. Pupils' attainment through the school is broadly average, and the school's data shows that pupils in the current Year 6 are working at similar levels to those achieved in the national tests in 2011. However, attainment reached by the end of Year 2 has been more variable, and pupils' progress through the school has been inconsistent. This is mainly due to variability in the quality of teaching in the past, and in teachers' assessments of pupils' levels of work because there has not been sufficient moderation of the accuracy of assessments across the school. Consequently, although teachers use their understanding of pupils' levels to group pupils by ability, they do not always match work closely enough to the needs of each group. Pupils' attainment in mathematics is stronger than in reading and writing, mainly because pupils do not master writing skills involving basic sentence structure and punctuation early enough, and particularly in Key Stage 1. Similarly, because the school has only recently introduced a handwriting policy, sometimes pupils lack fluency in getting their ideas down on paper quickly.

The school's ethos promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

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well, and is seen in the way pupils support the school's values and rules. They have a common desire to help and support each other. Good care, guidance and support mean that pupils are free from bullying. They know exactly what to do when minor incidents occur and are confident that their concerns are taken seriously by adults. Attendance, which has been low, has improved and is now broadly average because of the robust action taken by the school. However, the attendance of a few pupils is still too low, in many cases because of holidays taken in term time.

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.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the consistency of the quality of teaching to raise pupils' attainment and progress, particularly in English, by:
 - improving pupils' writing skills, especially their punctuation and sentence structure
 - implementing the handwriting policy consistently across the school
 - identifying and disseminating the most effective teaching approaches more widely across the school
 - improving the accuracy of teachers' assessments and using the information to plan activities which are always closely matched to pupils' needs and prior attainment.
- Develop the capacity of the school's leaders to implement the school's plans for improvement by strengthening further the leadership team.
- Improve the attendance of the small number of pupils whose attendance is low.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils' polite, respectful attitudes make a good contribution to learning as they benefit from listening to one another's ideas. They work well in groups to share and challenge one another's thinking. This was seen in a numeracy lesson where pupils responded well to the challenge of using their newly acquired knowledge of area to find out how much plastic covering would be needed for the classroom tables. Even when the pace of lessons slows, pupils listen attentively. Their concentration and good behaviour help them to undertake practical work effectively. This was seen in a number of mathematics lessons, with pupils making good progress because they saw the relevance of their learning. Because pupils are required to record their findings for themselves, they develop good presentation skills and take a pride in their work. The systematic teaching of phonics (letters and sounds) is boosting pupils' reading skills, and the school has introduced a range of approaches to improve performance in writing, for example by using writing skills more in other subjects. By the time pupils reach the older classes, they have good information and communication technology skills and competently use the internet for research. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the skilled support of

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teaching assistants and take part enthusiastically in lessons. Like their peers, they make satisfactory progress from their starting points, although sometimes they lack the confidence to do enough for themselves. Pupils from minority ethnic groups also make satisfactory progress. While pupils were seen to read the comments made by their teachers on their work during the inspection, they do not routinely follow up teachers' suggestions to try out something new. However, pupils have a satisfactory understanding of how their work can be improved, often because of the good oral feedback they are given by teachers.

Pupils respond well to the opportunities they have to keep fit through physical education lessons and extra-curricular clubs with a sports coach. They know how to look after themselves and benefit from the promotion of healthy eating at lunch time, recognised in a recent Healthy Schools award. Pupils have a good appreciation of the diversity of lifestyles and cultures in society because of the opportunities provided by the school for them to explore the world around them, for example in the 'It's a Small World' project. They show concern for others through fundraising, such as in the current harvest project to 'Send a Cow to Africa'. Pupils undertake responsibilities diligently, such as acting as house captains or playground buddies, or helping in assembly. Although the members of the school council have taken on the responsibility for ensuring value for money in purchasing playground equipment, other opportunities for them to develop leadership skills, such as by running their own events and making a greater contribution to their local community, are limited.

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	3
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

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How effective is the provision?

Much good teaching was observed during the inspection and the school's records indicate improvement over the last year. However, teaching is satisfactory overall because some remains less strong as teachers develop their skills and understanding of the school's expectations. Lessons are carefully planned with good quality materials, such as laminated information sheets which help pupils to understand their tasks. Teachers illustrate learning well, often using well-chosen software, seen when a teacher demonstrated place value well on the computer screen. Similarly, younger pupils used a large carpet number square and actively moved numbers around to find pairs of numbers totalling seven. There is a growing practice of evaluating pupils' success against the learning objective of the lesson, which is helping teachers adjust their planning to more closely match pupils' needs and prior learning.

However, because the assessments made at the end of each year are not fully accurate, teachers do not always plan tasks well. In some lessons, all pupils are given the same input by the teacher and are required to undertake the same task rather than varied activities which are related to the different learning and skills to be developed by each group. Sometimes this means that pupils have to listen to the teacher for too long, rather than consolidate their understanding by doing things for themselves. However, teaching currently ensures that pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in each year group. A range of strategies support those pupils with special educational needs/and or disabilities or who are underachieving. However, there has been limited evaluation of the impact of these approaches to ensure that the most appropriate support is provided at the earliest possible opportunity.

Changes to the curriculum are impacting positively on pupils' learning and their enjoyment of school. Displays in classrooms and around the school show the vibrancy of topic work in stimulating pupils' thinking and widening their horizons. Links between subjects are strong, for example in a Victorian topic, links are evident across history, science and literacy, while 'The Great Paella Quest' links learning across geography, English, and mathematics and introduces pupils to Spanish. In Key Stage 2, where progress has been stronger, topic work provides a valuable context for pupils to practise their literacy skills, such as for persuasive writing, seen in a Year 6 lesson where pupils were debating whether their classroom should become a cinema or a library the following week. Links with a school in France give direct relevance to developing French language skills.

Pupils are cared for and supported well in their personal development, and the school has successfully helped to remove barriers to learning for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Pupils' behaviour is managed consistently and calmly by all adults. Consequently, the behaviour of a few pupils who find it challenging to meet the school's expectations at all times does not impact negatively on the learning of others. Strategies to improve attendance have resulted in a significant decrease in the number of pupils who are persistently absent, particularly

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this term.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and staff are ambitious for the school, and morale is high because of the recently established 'new vision' so that all are clear about the school's direction. The headteacher still carries a heavy workload because the senior team is inexperienced and does not have a full complement of staff. However, the headteacher and governing body have taken appropriate action to strengthen leadership capacity on an interim basis. This arrangement is providing a useful boost to the professional development of the relatively recently formed teaching team, and is providing additional capacity to develop and implement action plans to bring about improvement

The school's relationships with parents and carers are positive. The school regularly surveys perceptions about its work which helps to shape developments. For example, parental concerns about safety in the mornings were addressed through the introduction of a 'walking caterpillar', with adults supervising play before school and the walk to the school playground from a designated 'drop off' point. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and meet current requirements. Although all groups of pupils make similar progress, including those from minority ethnic groups who speak English as an additional language and those known to be eligible for free school meals, the monitoring and comparison of the attainment and progress of groups of pupils is inconsistent. This means that the promotion of equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is satisfactory rather than good. The school operates as a cohesive society and pupils have a good respect for their own and the wider community, showing the school's good promotion of community cohesion.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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	3

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Reception class with skill levels below those typical for their age, especially in the areas of language and number, and their understanding of the world around them. Good care and the welcoming, stimulating environment help children to adapt quickly to the school's routines. Behaviour is good and children play safely and talk happily about what they are doing. Because they feel secure, they quickly develop confidence and, by the time they move into Year 1, children are working within the expected levels for their age. Although girls do a little better than boys, both boys and girls make good progress in all areas of learning. Aware of the relative weaknesses in the development of boys' early literacy skills, there is a current focus on broadening the range of approaches to engage boys in writing activities. Children thoroughly enjoy learning letters and sounds, and this gives them a secure basis for later reading and writing.

Adults ensure an effective balance between adult-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. The latter are managed well, requiring children to provide reasons for their choice and then to report back on what they have done. The teacher uses this and other assessment information well to plan children's next steps in learning. The staff team is enthusiastic and knowledgeable about children's learning and developmental needs. Good leadership is shown in the improvements made since the last inspection, for example in the outdoor area, and the identification of where further improvements can be made. As such, a current priority is to develop stronger links with pre-school settings, particularly within the campus, to improve and strengthen children's learning from the moment they arrive in school.

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

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Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers who returned the questionnaire are positive about all aspects of the school. Parents and carers express particular satisfaction that their children enjoy school and are helped to lead a healthy lifestyle. A few parents and carers indicate in their questionnaire responses and in additional written comments that their children are not making enough progress. The inspection found that, although pupils make satisfactory progress over time, this has not been consistent each year, but that progress is at least satisfactory now in all classes. Inspection findings do not endorse the view of a few parents and carers that the school does not take account of their suggestions and concerns. The school values the views of parents and carers and uses a range of approaches, including school surveys and headteacher coffee mornings, to hear parents' and carers' views. Staff report back regularly on findings in newsletters, and are willing to arrange meetings at times convenient to parents and carers. A few parents and carers raised individual concerns and their views were taken into account during the inspection.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westgate 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 48 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 207 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	29	60	17	35	1	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	30	63	15	31	3	6	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	21	44	21	44	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	19	40	23	48	2	4	2	4
The teaching is good at this school	18	38	27	56	2	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	20	42	25	52	1	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	26	54	20	42	1	2	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)	8	17	28	58	3	6	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	15	31	27	56	1	2	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	19	40	21	44	1	2	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	11	23	32	67	2	4	2	4
The school is led and managed effectively	20	42	23	48	2	4	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	22	46	23	48	2	4	1	2

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.



12 October 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westgate Primary School, Dartford DA1 2LP

You may remember that inspectors visited your school recently. Thank you for making us so welcome. We enjoyed talking to the school council members, who were very helpful in representing your views about the school. This letter is to explain what we found out. Westgate Primary is a satisfactory school.

These are some of the things that the school does well.

- You enjoy your lessons because you have many different and interesting things to do, and your good behaviour helps you to learn.
- Children get off to a good start in Reception and have exciting things to do inside and in the outdoor area.
- The school looks after you well so that you are safe and secure.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and fit; you have good opportunities for sport and you have healthy lunches.
- School leaders and the governing body work hard together and are keen to improve the school so that it becomes good overall.

We have made some recommendations for your headteacher and teachers to help you to make faster progress. We have asked them to:

- help you to improve your punctuation and sentence structure when writing and make sure that you all use the school's recommended handwriting style
- share their knowledge about the level of your work and their good ideas about your learning so that more lessons are like the very best ones.

We are sure that you will help by continuing to do your best. You cannot help it if you are ill, but a few of you do not attend regularly. Remember that if you are not in school, you cannot learn well. The governing body plan to appoint more staff to be part of the team which runs the school.

We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Helen Hutchings
Lead inspector

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