

Wimbish Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114990
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378974
Inspection dates	5–6 December 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	54
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Frances Johnson
Headteacher	Christine Spain
Date of previous school inspection	2 December 2008
School address	Tye Green Wimbish Saffron Walden CB10 2XE
Telephone number	01799 599245
Fax number	01799 599029
Email address	admin@wimbish.essex.sch.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. They visited nine lessons which were taught by a total of three teachers. They observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with safeguarding procedures and self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of their work. They also scrutinised improvement plans as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders as well as the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of six members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 16 questionnaires that had been completed and returned by parents and carers.

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

- How well are more-able pupils challenged in writing?
- How effectively are teachers using information about progress to plan the 'next steps' for pupils?
- What is the impact of subject leaders on pupils' outcomes?
- How effectively does the school induct pupils who begin mid-way through the school year?

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this smaller-than-average primary school come from a wide area. The very large majority are from White British families. The proportion known to be eligible for free school meals is very low. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities varies considerably from year to year and, currently, is well above average. Many of the pupils identified have social and emotional needs. Far more pupils than in most schools transfer in and out during the school year because the school serves families from a nearby army barracks. The school has won a number of national awards in recent years, including Healthy Schools status and the 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

This is a good school whose effective systems to support, nurture and guide pupils contribute to its warm and positive ethos. The school welcomes an unusually high number of pupils who start mid-way through the year. Very effective procedures are in place to assess these pupils' learning needs quickly and help them take a full and active part in school life.

Pupils are well known as individuals, and staff are quick to spot and deal with any problems or concerns that arise. All the pupils who responded to the questionnaire agreed that adults in their school care for them well. Pupils' good behaviour contributes to their effective learning in class. They are well motivated and enjoy coming to school, as their active participation in lessons shows.

Pupils' achievement is good in both key stages. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities also achieve well. Attainment in English, while broadly average, is not as strong as in mathematics, and the school has rightly identified this as an area for improvement. A wide range of initiatives has been introduced to improve reading and spelling, for example, and these are beginning to show a positive impact. Not all pupils have a solid understanding of sounds and letters, but they are being supported to improve these skills effectively. Older pupils do not yet have a secure understanding of how to 'read between the lines', to draw subtle meanings from the text and understand the authors' opinions.

Teaching is generally good. Teachers provide stimulating and relevant material that engages pupils' interest and increases their motivation. Relationships between pupils and teachers are good and pupils' behaviour is managed sensitively and effectively. Although teachers mark pupils' books regularly they do not always provide enough information to pupils about how to improve their written work. Pupils are not reminded often enough about their individual targets for improvement in writing to help them focus on these when completing their work.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage enjoy all the experiences that are organised for them and make good progress over the year. The activities organised for them indoors thoroughly engage their interest and enthusiasm. However, the outdoor area provides only a limited range of activities to stimulate children's learning, especially their independence, creativity and imagination.

The headteacher drives the school's work rigorously, yet sensitively, ensuring that

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plans focus clearly on improving pupils' achievement. Consequently, there is a strong feeling of teamwork throughout the school and a clear commitment towards improvement. Effective monitoring and self-evaluation procedures mean that school leaders, including the governing body, have an accurate view of the school's performance. Subject leaders take an active role in monitoring and leading improvements. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, with pupils' attainment rising and the school catering well for the diverse needs of pupils who transfer in from other schools. There is a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in English by:
 - ensuring that all pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of letters and sounds
 - ensuring that older pupils are able to draw meanings from the texts they are reading and understand the authors' opinions
 - ensuring that more-able pupils are consistently challenged in writing lessons
 - embedding the school's marking policy, so that teachers provide good ongoing advice to pupils about how to improve their writing
 - reminding pupils more often about their individual targets for writing.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by using the outdoor area more effectively to support children's learning, especially in developing their independence, creativity and imagination.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children's skills vary considerably when they start in Reception but are often below those expected for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, the attainment of pupils, including those who transfer in from other schools, is above average in mathematics and average in English. Achievement in mathematics is especially good because pupils are well motivated by the challenging nature of the lessons. Girls and boys respond with great enthusiasm and excitement, learning a great deal from their discussions and investigations. Pupils in Year 5 showed good resilience and concentration when they worked together to multiply two- and three-digit numbers by 10, 100 and 1000. They listened carefully to the teacher's explanation and were excited when they reached the correct answers. Pupils make good progress in English, although attainment is lower than in mathematics, reflecting the low starting points and lack of continuity in teaching experienced by many pupils who join the school part way through their primary education. The school is tackling the issues in English through curriculum developments and interventions. Reading is a major focus for the school this year; a good number of pupils have taken part in the 'Circus Stars Reading Challenge' organised by the local library. This has improved their enjoyment in reading and satisfaction in completing a series of books.

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Pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding for others’ feelings and beliefs and often go out of their way to support and encourage each other, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are new to the school. They reflect sensitively about what life is like in their twin-town in Nepal, writing good-quality poems to reflect their feelings. One pupil wrote, ‘One small lady meditating quietly, Nine Nepalese mountains waiting to be discovered, Ten singing bowls waiting to be played.’ Pupils make a significant contribution to their school and wider communities through their work on the school council and to support charities, such as The Army Benevolent Fund. Pupils know how to keep safe in and out of school and are very aware of road safety and the dangers of drugs. They have a good awareness of the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle, recognised through a national award. Attendance is average. This, coupled with their good mathematical skills and average literacy levels, means they are prepared satisfactorily for their future education.

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	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

How effective is the provision?

Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to present lessons confidently and answer pupils’ questions clearly. Positive relationships mean that pupils are not afraid to ask for help when needed. Good teaching was seen in a mathematics lesson for pupils in Years 2 and 3, for example, where pupils worked together to solve money problems. The lesson was carefully planned, and information about pupils’ progress was used well to set activities at different levels to

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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meet pupils’ varying needs and abilities. Good use of practical equipment meant that younger pupils could count out the coins and give the correct change. In contrast, occasionally the more-able pupils are not challenged well enough by the writing activities, and they make satisfactory, rather than good progress.

Additional adults in the school are deployed very effectively to support individuals and small groups and have a good impact on pupils’ progress, especially for those who join part way through the school year. The school’s marking policy is clear but is not yet consistently applied in order to provide pupils with enough useful information about how to improve their written work. Pupils are conscious of their individual targets for writing but are not always reminded to focus on these during writing activities.

The good curriculum supports pupils’ academic and personal development well. Pupils enjoy learning French from a teacher from the local secondary school and trying ‘taster’ sessions to see if they would like to play a musical instrument. The school recently reviewed its curriculum to make it more relevant and interesting to pupils, and this has had a positive impact on their involvement and enjoyment. There are good opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects, but the use of information and communication technology is not as extensive as it might be. An exciting new project to develop the school grounds is providing further opportunities to enable pupils to learn science, geography and other subjects in an outdoor environment. Gifted and talented pupils participate in a good range of activities organised through the local schools cluster. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of clubs on offer, such as gardening, fencing, football and netball. Annual residential visits enable pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 to participate in a range of exciting and challenging physical activities and learn how to live together away from home.

Pupils are well cared for in school. Good links with the local secondary school mean that transition arrangements are well established so that pupils transfer confidently at the end of Year 6. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have carefully designed individual learning plans which are reviewed regularly and contribute to their good progress. The school seeks advice and support from a wide range of agencies to enable staff to meet the needs of pupils with specific difficulties. There are secure systems in place to encourage regular attendance, and the school continues to work with parents and carers of pupils whose attendance causes concern.

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

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The effectiveness of care, guidance and support

2

How effective are leadership and management?

School leaders give a firm steer to the school’s work and there is a clear focus on securing improvement. Coordinators take an active role in monitoring the school’s performance, planning to secure improvement and checking the impact of initiatives on pupils’ progress. The governing body has a good knowledge of the school’s work and the challenges which it faces. The governing body calls on a wide range of useful expertise with which to support and challenge the school and plan for future improvement.

Regular consultations with parents and carers ensure that their views are taken into account when planning for school improvement. Parents and carers receive good information about their children’s progress and informative newsletters which ensure they are kept up to date about school events. Good partnerships with a wide range of agencies provide effective opportunities, which the school could not otherwise provide, for pupils to engage in many activities within and beyond the school day. These include sports, French, mathematics and science. Effective links with senior personnel at the nearby army barracks support good communication between the school and the families it serves.

Safeguarding procedures are very well organised to ensure that pupils are safe at school. Very effective arrangements at the beginning and end of the school day ensure that pupils get off and on the school bus safely. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. The headteacher tracks the progress of different groups of pupils carefully to identify underachievement. Incidents of racist behaviour are rare and procedures are in place to ensure that any which arise are tackled promptly. The school promotes community cohesion well. There is a very strong feeling of community within the school and locality, good partnerships with other local schools and community organisations, and a good link with a school in Nepal.

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

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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 settle in quickly to Reception and begin to develop their confidence. The atmosphere is warm and inviting and children come into school happily each morning, ready to engage in all the activities provided for them. Relationships with parents and carers are positive and most are keen to read and contribute to the home-school diaries with details about their children’s achievements outside school. Effective systems ensure that they transfer easily from pre-school playgroups. An effective partnership between the two teachers currently leading the provision ensures children’s safety and welfare, and enables areas for improvement to be identified quickly.

Children enjoy a good range of activities that are directed by adults and some that they choose for themselves. Consequently, they make good progress. Activities led by adults are effective, enabling children to develop their knowledge of letters and sounds and number awareness well. Children eagerly discussed different sources of light, recording their findings on large posters. A few tried to write labels using the letters and sounds that they already knew. Adults check children’s progress regularly and use this information well to ensure that activities challenge children of different abilities. Children like choosing activities for themselves, and adults take every opportunity to support their learning by interacting with them to challenge their thinking and extend their language. Children enjoy the activities provided indoors, for example, using the interactive whiteboard and experimenting with torches in the blackout tent. However, the outdoor area is not yet developed to its fullest extent to provide a stimulating range of experiences which support children’s learning in different areas, especially their independence, creativity and imagination.

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

The proportion of parental questionnaires returned was lower than average. Those who responded are positive about most aspects of the school’s work. The vast

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majority agree that their children enjoy school, the teaching is good and their children's needs are met effectively. They say that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and that the school helps the children to develop healthy lifestyles. These positive views were endorsed by inspection findings. A minority of parents expressed concerns about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors observed lessons in every class, observed behaviour in the playground, assembly and the dining hall, held discussions with pupils and examined the school's systems for managing behaviour. Their evidence confirmed that behaviour is good and that any instances of unacceptable behaviour are managed well. A small minority had concerns about the leadership and management of the school and about how well their children are prepared for the future. Inspection evidence confirms that the school is led and managed well and that pupils are adequately prepared for the future.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wimbish 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 16 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 54 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	56	6	38	0	0	1	6
The school keeps my child safe	6	38	8	50	0	0	1	6
The school informs me about my child’s progress	7	44	8	50	0	0	1	6
My child is making enough progress at this school	8	50	7	44	0	0	1	6
The teaching is good at this school	9	56	6	38	1	6	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	11	69	3	19	2	13	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	7	44	8	50	1	6	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)	6	38	5	31	2	13	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	6	38	9	56	1	6	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	4	25	5	31	3	19	2	13
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	8	50	6	38	1	6	1	6
The school is led and managed effectively	6	38	6	38	1	6	1	6
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	9	56	5	31	1	6	1	6

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 8 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.



7 December 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wimbish Primary School, Saffron Walden, CB10 2XE

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently to your school and giving us your opinions about the school. Your views in the questionnaire, and everything else that we saw, helped us to get to know your school and how well it works. You go to a good school. Here are some of the things we liked best.

- You work hard in class and behave well.
- The teaching is good and helps you to make good progress.
- You understand how to keep safe, healthy and fit.
- You are keen to learn about different countries and cultures.
- The adults look after you well and arrange a wide range of activities to make learning exciting.
- You welcome new pupils to your school and everyone works hard to make sure they settle in quickly.

There are a few things that could be even better. We have asked teachers to make sure that you all gain a really good understanding of letters and sounds so that you can improve your reading and writing even more. We have asked them to teach you how to gain information from what you are reading so you can understand your books even better. We think that the teachers could give you more advice about how to improve your written work and remind you about your individual targets more often. Finally, we have asked the teachers in the Reception class to develop the outdoor area to provide more activities to help those of you in this class to learn.

You can all play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and continue to attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers
Lead inspector

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