

Weston Mill Community Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	113269
Local authority	Plymouth
Inspection number	388313
Inspection dates	4–5 July 2012
Lead inspector	Grahame Sherfield HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	304
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alison Allen
Headteacher	Alison Nettleship
Date of previous school inspection	22–23 September 2010
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	4–5 July 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Grahame Sherfield

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Her Majesty's Inspector

Susan Smith

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with one day's notice. The inspectors observed teaching and learning in 22 lessons, taught by 14 teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and pupils and met some parents and carers informally. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at key documents, such as the school's plans for improvement and the minutes of meetings of the governing body. They also considered the outcomes of a survey of the views of parents and carers conducted by the school in which 114 paper questionnaires were returned.

Information about the school

Weston Mill is larger than the average-sized primary school. It serves a largely White British community from the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The percentage of those known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school meets the current government floor standard for the proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 and above in both English and mathematics.

When Weston Mill Community Primary School was inspected in September 2010, it was judged to require special measures. Subsequently, the school was inspected on four occasions. At the last monitoring inspection, the school was judged to be making good progress.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Weston Mill has made very good progress and it is now a good school where pupils enjoy their learning and benefit from good opportunities for personal development in a warm and caring environment. The school is not outstanding as actions to improve teaching and pupils' progress have currently secured good, rather than outstanding, achievement. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- Children get off to a good start in the Foundation Unit. The progress of Year 2 pupils has shown some unevenness as the curriculum did not fully meet their needs at first in Year 1 and there have been some weaknesses in teaching. These problems have been systematically addressed and Year 2 pupils have since made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school is rightly determined to ensure that progress accelerates more smoothly through Years 1 and 2. Progress has improved significantly, particularly in Years 3 to 6, because of better teaching and rigorous tracking of pupils' progress. Achievement in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 is now good.
- Teaching has improved, particularly of reading, and is good. Much good teaching was observed by inspectors with engaging activities proceeding at a brisk pace in classrooms that provided a rich environment for learning. Pupils concentrated well and were keen to contribute their ideas.
- Behaviour is good. Pupils' attitudes to their learning are positive and pupils report that they feel safe in school. The school has worked successfully to promote better attendance but it remains broadly average. Data are analysed to identify patterns of attendance by different groups, but information is not used sufficiently to inform actions to promote better attendance.
- The headteacher has shown a steely determination to improve the school. She has successfully established strong senior and middle leadership and focused

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sharply on improving teaching. There is a clear ambition for the continuing improvement of the school that is widely shared.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Continue to accelerate progress in Years 1 and 2 more smoothly so that Year 2 pupils achieve standards in reading, writing and mathematics that are above the national average by the summer of 2013.
- Improve attendance so that it is above average by the summer of 2013 by:
 - embedding and developing current approaches to promoting good attendance
 - targeting actions to improve attendance more effectively at the poorest attenders.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

In most of the lessons observed during the inspection pupils worked well. They made good progress in lessons when they tackled challenges that teachers had designed carefully, using their good assessment of pupils' previous work that was frequently noted on their lesson planning. Pupils responded well to opportunities to work collaboratively and to pace their learning within timings established by the teachers. Where progress was occasionally satisfactory, pupils' pace of learning slowed as the learning activities met their needs less effectively.

Children join the school with skills and knowledge below levels expected for their age and well below these in communication, language and literacy. They make good progress in the Foundation Unit and, by the end of Reception, standards overall are as expected nationally.

After successfully addressing a dip, the school's data and inspection evidence show that progress is accelerating in Years 1 and 2 and that Year 2 pupils are on track to reach broadly average standards in the summer 2012. Attainment in reading was below average in 2011 and lower than that in writing and mathematics. There has been good progress as a result of better teaching of the sounds that letters make and evidence indicates broadly average standards in 2012. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has also accelerated in Years 3 to 6, with some making exceptional advances. Attainment by the end of Year 6, including in reading, is now above average. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers as activities in lessons, and any necessary additional support, are tailored well to their needs. The school has been seeking to narrow the historical gap between girls' and boys' attainment in mathematics. There has been considerable success and boys' attainment in this subject is now very similar to that of the girls.

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Most of the parents and carers who responded to the school's questionnaire think that their children are making good progress in the school. Inspection evidence shows accelerating progress and confirms this view.

Quality of teaching

Teachers have established good relationships and lessons involve stimulating approaches and materials to which pupils respond well. Teaching assistants support pupils' learning effectively. The curriculum provides engaging contexts within which important skills, such as writing, can be taught and is adjusted well, where appropriate, to meet the particular needs of individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious and teachers provide frequent opportunities for pupils to think carefully with a partner before contributing their ideas. They use a good range of approaches to check pupils' understanding as the lesson proceeds and adjust learning in the light of the information gathered. Subject knowledge is used well to encourage pupils to use appropriate vocabulary. Marking of work is good overall, with some excellent practice, particularly in classes for the older pupils, in identifying next steps in pupils' learning and securing a dialogue with them about improvement. Teaching makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly in supporting them in working collaboratively and listening with respect to the contributions of others.

The best teaching observed was characterised by high expectations of pupils, supported by teachers' good subject knowledge. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, activities involving pentominoes (shapes made from five squares) were well adjusted to meet varying learning needs. The highest attainers were challenged to consider which pentominoes might generate the highest product when allocating the numbers one to five to each square and then multiplying those in adjoining squares. Making strong links with previous learning was another good feature. For example, in a Year 6 English lesson the teacher used the 'learning wall' very well to help pupils make links with earlier work on printed guides and activities. Resources were chosen carefully to enable pupils to make good progress from their starting points and explore more visual and interactive material on the internet. Relating learning to real experiences was effective, such as when groups in the Foundation Unit were exploring writing to say 'thank you' to the museum they had just visited. Some very effective teaching of reading was observed in most year groups where the consistent use of approaches well known to the pupils generated real engagement in learning. Where teaching was less strong, teachers sometimes talked too much and, on occasion, the challenge of activities depended too much on support from adults rather than on the nature of the task. In such circumstances, the pace of learning sometimes slowed.

Almost all of the parents and carers who responded to the school's questionnaire think that their children are taught well. Inspection evidence supports this view.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils treat each other with respect. They report that bullying is rare and any instances, mostly name calling arising from arguments, are tackled effectively by the staff. The school's behaviour records confirm this picture. Pupils respond well to opportunities to take on responsibilities around the school. The system of rewards and sanctions is understood well and consistently and effectively applied. Pupils are particularly keen to gain team points and secure the rewards available. They show a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, for example from the dangers they might encounter on the internet. Pupils in need of a little extra support are well cared for and the school makes good use of the support of other agencies as appropriate. The school stresses the importance of attendance which features regularly in parents' newsletters and is the focus of a competition between classes. Although attendance has improved significantly since the previous inspection, the school has correctly identified that it needs to rise further and has started to consider further activities that could be taken.

Almost all of the parents and carers who returned the school's questionnaire think that their children feel safe at school and the very large majority believe that the school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour. Inspection evidence supports these positive views.

Leadership and management

Careful tracking of pupils' progress results in additional support or challenge for pupils as appropriate. It is complemented by lesson observations that clearly identify strengths and areas for development. Rigorous scrutinies of pupils' work and teachers' planning also contribute well to the effective targeting of actions to improve teaching and pupils' achievement. Leadership of the teams of teachers and of English and mathematics is strong and plays a key role in self-evaluation procedures that result in realistic judgements and clear priorities for further development. The governing body is well informed by detailed information from the headteacher and other staff and by its own activities to gain first-hand evidence of the school at work. It is well placed to ask questions of the school's leadership. The school has acted with vigour to address the weaknesses identified in the inspection in 2010 and successfully accelerated progress in English and mathematics, improved teaching, and strengthened leadership. Consequently, the capacity to improve further is good.

The curriculum is broad and balanced. It engages pupils effectively and meets their needs well, for example in developing their literacy and numeracy skills as well as their growing understanding of the local community and beyond. There is a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, for example through the good range of well-attended extra-curricular activities and the opportunities for residential visits, as well as special events such as the circus day for Years 1 and 2. The curriculum and the ethos of the school contribute strongly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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The school has good partnerships with a range of other organisations to extend the opportunities for pupils, both in their work and in their personal development. Good examples include the links with the Excellence Cluster, a local primary school and Plymouth Argyle Football Club. The school engages well with parents and carers and most think that the school helps them to support their children's learning and responds to any concerns. It works effectively to ensure that all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs, make similar progress to others. This shows it is successful in promoting equal opportunities for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds to achieve as well as each other. The school also strives to ensure that discrimination against any group is avoided at all times. Arrangements for safeguarding meet requirements and all necessary policies are fully implemented.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



6 July 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Weston Mill Community Primary School, Plymouth PL2 2EL

Thank you for your involvement in the recent inspection, particularly for the friendly and polite way in which you talked to us about your school.

As some of you will remember, I have been visiting Weston Mill regularly since March 2011 to see if the school has been improving. I am pleased to say that there have been important improvements and you are now benefiting from a good education. Your headteacher and the rest of the staff have been working very successfully to make things better for you. Here are some of the important things we found out about your school during our visit.

- The progress you make in your work is much better and it is now good.
- Teaching has improved and is good. Teachers often check that you are making enough progress in your work.
- You behave well in the classrooms and around the school and you told us that you feel safe.
- Children in the Foundation Unit get off to a good start.

There are two things we have asked your school to do to keep improving.

- Continue to speed up the progress pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. Those of you in Years 1 and 2 can help by always doing your best and taking your teachers' advice on how to do better.
- Improve your attendance. The attendance of some pupils in the school is not very good and we have asked the school to encourage everyone to come to school as much as possible and to support families that have problems in getting children to school every day. A few of you can help a lot here by coming to school more often than you do at the moment.

Thank you again for your involvement in this inspection and also in my four previous visits. We wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector

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