

Westcourt Primary School

Silver Road, Gravesend, Kent, DA12 4JG

Inspection dates 7–8 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils achieve well. They make good progress from low starting points to reach standards in English and mathematics that are broadly average by the end of Year 6.
- Leaders and managers have provided a range of training and support to ensure teachers are able to meet the high standards they set. Consequently, teaching is now good overall, with some that is outstanding.
- Pupils behave well around the school and in lessons, showing care and respect for each other, the adults who help them and the environment in which they learn.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and use the guidance teachers give them to help them improve their work.
- The school has worked effectively with parents and carers, and outside agencies, to improve attendance, which is now in line with national figures.
- Leaders, including the governing body, have successfully embedded a culture of high expectations where everyone is aiming for excellence.
- The aspirational targets leaders set for teachers to meet have been instrumental in driving up the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics.
- Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and given opportunities to discuss moral and ethical issues, such as civil rights and racist behaviour.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers are now highly adept at using assessment to drive rapid progress in English and mathematics, but this is not yet as effective in other subjects.
- Teachers are not as clear in subjects other than English and mathematics how pupils will achieve success in their learning. Books are not marked as comprehensively and pupils do not take as much care with their presentation.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 16 lessons or parts of lessons, including the teaching of phonics (letter patterns and the sounds they make), two of which were joint observations with senior members of staff. All teachers were observed.
- Inspectors attended assemblies, listened to pupils read and held meetings with pupils, staff and representatives from the governing body and the local authority.
- There were insufficient responses for inspectors to take note of the results of the online Parent View survey but they did consider the outcomes of surveys of staff, and parents and carers, conducted shortly before the inspection.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils' work in lessons, as well as the work they have completed over time in their books.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including those relating to safeguarding and child protection, the governing body minutes, notes of visits from the local authority, information relating to pupils' academic performance, documents showing how senior leaders evaluate the quality of teaching, logs relating to behaviour and attendance figures.

Inspection team

Jeanie Jovanova, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Gianni Bianchi

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is average, as is the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- More than a half of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families. This is more than double the national average. No children in the school are from service families.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. A range of other ethnic groups are represented in varying proportions.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is just above the national average, a few of whom are at the early stages of learning English.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- There has been considerable staff turnover since the previous inspection, including the appointment of a new headteacher and a new deputy headteacher, as well as the formation of a new governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Sharpen teachers' assessment practice in other subjects to the quality of that in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring the steps pupils need to take to achieve success in the lesson are clear and help them to extend their skills and subject knowledge
 - marking work in books with tightly focused comments that clearly tell pupils what they need to do to improve
 - expecting the same exceptionally high quality of presentation of work as in literacy and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in language, communication and mathematical understanding.
- Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved greatly since the previous inspection. Everything is now geared at ensuring children get a really positive start to their education. Expectations are high and children respond well to this. They behave considerately, listen carefully to each other and their teachers, and apply themselves to tasks with an exceptional degree of concentration. The activities and resources available excite and enthuse children, which ensure high levels of engagement. As a result, the proportion of pupils achieving age-related expectations at the end of Reception has risen year on year.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have risen since the previous inspection. The most recent set of national assessments showed that the school has successfully overturned a long history of underperformance. The results in writing and mathematics have improved and are now broadly in line with national figures. While the school's results in reading have improved, they remain below national averages. Nevertheless, this represents good progress from the pupils' low starting points.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stage 2. Standards at the end of Year 6 have also risen and are now in line with national averages in both English and mathematics. Figures for pupils currently in Years 3 to 6 show that standards are continuing to rise year on year.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because their needs are met well and any specialist provision they receive is carefully evaluated to ensure it is effective.
- Pupils for whom the pupil premium applies achieve exceptionally well. Leaders and managers check their performance carefully using a range of measures such as the average point scores gained in national tests. The most recent scores for this group showed that the school is narrowing the gap substantially compared with all pupils nationally and with other groups in school. Leaders know, therefore, that the funding is being used effectively.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well because there is a strong focus on the language demands of each lesson and specialist vocabulary is clearly explained.
- Pupils from a range of different groups achieve equally well because the school has high expectations of all pupils and puts measures into place to ensure that all have an equal chance of achieving success and are not disadvantaged in any way.
- As the quality of teaching continues to improve, progress continues to accelerate, with most pupils making rapid progress in nearly all year groups last term in reading, writing and mathematics. However, progress is not as rapid in other subjects and this is one of the main reasons why achievement is not yet outstanding.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers have responded positively to the measures introduced to sharpen the quality of classroom practice. As a result, teaching has been improved since the previous inspection and is now good overall and continuing to improve so that an increasing proportion is outstanding.
- Phonics is taught well. This is borne out by the fact that a higher proportion of pupils reached the expected level in the phonics screening check in Year 1 last year than was the case nationally. Staff across the school have been trained so that any pupils who have gaps in their phonic skills can be identified quickly and helped to catch up. In an outstanding lesson, pupils cheered when they were told it was phonics because they are enthused by the fast pace and like the confidence they gain from understanding how complex words are built.
- Pupils talk confidently about the strategies they use when reading. The new system brought in

to assess their reading abilities motivates pupils because it ensures they know which books to read to help them develop their skills further.

- Teachers use a range of strategies particularly well to ensure pupils make good progress in lessons. Teachers' introductions are clear and well paced, and pupils are involved in drawing up lists of what they need to include in their work for it to be as successful as possible.
- Teachers set pupils targets in reading, writing and mathematics based on a sound understanding of what each of them needs to do to move forward in their learning. Pupils know when they have completed a piece of work that shows they have met their target. For example, in a Year 1 lesson, a pupil was proud to show the teacher he had stayed on the lines when writing a descriptive sentence, and marked this off accordingly in his book.
- Marking in English and mathematics is detailed and useful. Teachers give pupils time to read the helpful comments they have made and respond to them, and it is clear that this strategy leads to pupils gaining a deeper understanding.
- The assessment practices in other subjects do not lead to equally rapid progress because teachers do not make the steps pupils need to take to achieve success in their learning as clear, do not mark books as thoroughly and do not expect the same high standards of presentation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils have good attitudes to learning so lessons proceed in a timely and productive fashion. They listen carefully and contribute thoughtfully, and therefore gain a lot from their lessons.
- Pupils behave well around the school, lunchtimes are calm, and playtimes are safe and exciting because there is plenty to do and playground 'buddies' ensure no one is left out.
- Pupils feel safe at school, and parents and carers agree that the school keeps their children safe. Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet.
- Pupils have all signed the anti-bullying poster and understand clearly what constitutes bullying and why it is unacceptable. They say it hardly ever happens but, on the rare occasions when it does, teachers deal with it swiftly and effectively.
- Behaviour is managed consistently well. Incidents of poor behaviour, which are logged carefully and checked regularly by a designated member of staff, have decreased both overall and for individual pupils who have particular behavioural needs.
- Attendance overall has improved since the previous inspection because leaders have used an imaginative range of solutions to support pupils and their families to ensure regular attendance. While attendance has also improved for the small number of pupils who are persistently absent, further work is necessary to ensure they attend every day.

The leadership and management are good

- The new headteacher and her team are highly ambitious for the school community. They have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and make it clear there is no place for mediocrity and half measures. It is this positive and aspirational attitude that has driven the raft of recent improvements so swiftly and effectively.
 - The measures senior leaders have taken to improve the quality of teaching have been highly effective. They support teachers well in understanding what is needed to ensure pupils make rapid progress and check classroom practice regularly for evidence that their advice is being acted upon.
 - The management of individual teachers' performance is equally effective. Teachers' targets clearly indicate how much progress pupils in their class are expected to make and regular meetings are held with senior staff to check that they are on track.
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- Senior staff have an astute view of the school's strengths and development planning clearly indicates what needs to be done to continue the successful improvements that have already taken place. They are clear that, in order to be outstanding, they need to ensure progress in other subjects matches that made in English and mathematics. Leaders of other subjects are not implementing robustly enough the successful marking and assessment approaches occurring in English and mathematics to ensure pupils make equally rapid progress.
 - The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. There are many opportunities across different subjects to discuss and debate serious issues about ethics and morality, such as an outstanding religious education lesson where pupils were analysing different faiths' views on inclusion and anti-racism. The new leadership of physical education is enabling pupils to take part in sporting activities within the community which enhances their self-esteem, develops team work skills and creates a sense of pride in the school. Pupils are given a range of experiences, including trips out, visitors in to school and after-school clubs, because leaders believe in broadening pupils' horizons as much as possible in readiness for the next phase in their education.
 - The school has positive relationships with the local authority, which initially offered a range of support. The school has begun to call upon that support less and less as it builds increasingly robust internal capacity to improve.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - The newly formed governing body has wasted no time in gaining an understanding of the school's performance. Governors have a clear view of how the school compares with other schools nationally and use this insight to ask probing questions of senior leaders as to how to drive further improvement. A number of the governors have a proven track record of supporting school improvement and are putting their considerable experience to good use by passing their skills on to those new to the role. Governors avail themselves of training in order to keep abreast of the changing educational landscape. Governors keep a tight rein on finances and demand value for money. They know, for example, that the pupil premium funding is spent effectively on driving up attainment and progress for those pupils entitled to it so that it outstrips that of similar pupils in other schools. Governors support senior leaders in managing the performance of teachers in a way that fuels improvement of the overall quality of teaching. Governors understand the link between professional excellence and financial reward. Conversely, they are very clear that moving up to the next point on the pay scale is dependent on teachers achieving the aspirational targets they have been set. They are committed to safeguarding all pupils and ensure that all requirements are met to the highest possible standard.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	118572
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	400406

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	218
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Bonner
Headteacher	Kim Shubrook
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 March 2010
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