

West Malling Church of England Primary School

Old Cricket Ground, Norman Road, West Malling, ME19 6RL

Inspection dates 15–16 May 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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.

- The headteacher, staff and governors work well together as a strong team and are united in their drive and ambition to provide the best possible experiences so that pupils develop as well-rounded individuals.
- Achievement is good. From starting points that are often well below those expected for their age, all groups of pupils, including those in the Language Centre, make good progress so that by the time they reach Year 6, attainment is broadly average.
- Teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are fun and interesting. Relationships between staff and pupils are good and pupils are well known as individuals by all staff.
- There are many enrichment opportunities that support pupils' academic skills and promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- Pupils' good attitudes and behaviour help them to work hard and learn well. They say they feel very safe in school and that they are looked after well and treated fairly. They do not fear bullying or any kind of discrimination.
- Leadership and management are good and regular checks are made on the quality of teaching and the progress pupils make.
- Governors have close links with the school and know the school very well. They successfully support the school and hold it to account for its performance.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough teaching that is outstanding because, in some lessons, teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve and so pupils do not make as much progress as they could.
- Progress in writing is not yet at the same level as that in reading. Pupils' handwriting and presentation of their work is not as good as it should be.
- Teachers do not always make the reasons for writing clear to pupils or give them enough opportunities for writing for real audiences so that they can develop an awareness of the needs of different readers as they write.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 16 lessons or part lessons. They talked to pupils about their work and listened to some pupils read.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher, other staff with key leadership responsibilities, groups of pupils, governors and an independent adviser who works with the school.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a range of documents, including the school's self-evaluation, target setting and improvement plan, records of pupils' progress, monitoring information and the safeguarding procedures.
- Inspectors took account of 37 responses to the online Parent View survey and a written comment from a parent. Inspectors also took account of 23 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Carol Vant

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- West Malling is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school includes the McGinty Language Centre, which delivers specialist provision for up to 21 pupils with speech, language and communication difficulties. There are currently 18 pupils in the centre, all of whom have a statement of special educational needs. They are taught in two learning groups, one for Reception age children and Key Stage 1 pupils and the other for Key Stage 2 pupils. The pupils spend part of their time in classes in the main school.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average. This is because all pupils in the Centre have statements of special educational needs and, because the school is known for its specialist provision, many pupils in the main school have speech, language and communication difficulties and are supported by school action plus.
- The school makes provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives additional funding (the pupil premium), because they are known to be eligible for free school meals, are in the care of the local authority or are children of service families, is above average. At West Malling, almost all the pupils eligible for the pupil premium are those entitled to free school meals. There are no pupils from service families.
- The school provides a daily breakfast club.
- West Malling Church of England Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 September 2012. When its predecessor school was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching in order to raise achievement by:
 - ensuring that in all lessons, there are consistently high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that they can make the best possible progress.
- Further raise achievement in writing by:
 - ensuring that pupils are clear about the purpose of their writing and have more opportunities for writing for real audiences, including other pupils, so that they develop an awareness of the needs of different readers as they write
 - improving handwriting and pupils' presentation of their work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Achievement is good because pupils are making good progress and most are on track to reach attainment in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6 that is in line with national averages. The proportions of pupils on track to reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are similar to the national picture.
- Children start at the school in the Reception class with skills, knowledge and understanding that are often well below the levels expected for their age, particularly in their personal, social and emotional development, literacy and numeracy skills. They make good progress and staff have good understanding of the needs of young children.
- All groups of pupils make good progress. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similar progress to others. Pupils, often with profound speech, language and communication difficulties in the centre and in the main school, make good progress from their starting points although they do not always reach the expected levels of attainment for their ages. They learn well in the centre and when they are included in the main school classes because of skilled support from the specialist teaching.
- In English, progress is strongest in reading. Reading has been the main focus for the school and is promoted well throughout the school through, for example, initiatives such as R.A.L.F (Reading's Always Lots of Fun). Pupils have a secure knowledge of phonics (learning letters and sounds) to help them read unfamiliar words and to help with spelling. Many pupils are fluent, confident readers who read regularly for pleasure and develop a depth of understanding of characters and plots and can use non-fiction texts and the internet competently for research skills.
- The school has correctly identified writing as a current focus, as progress is not as rapid as it is in reading. Leaders have already taken steps towards improving achievement by, for example, increasing the opportunities for extended sustained writing. Teachers do not always make the purpose of writing clear to pupils or give enough opportunities for pupils to write for different audiences, for example pupils in other classes, so that they can be aware of the needs of the reader as they write. Handwriting and the presentation of their work are weaker aspects of pupils' writing skills.
- Achievement in mathematics has improved with a focus on number and mental mathematics and additional support for those who need to catch up and those working towards the higher levels.
- There is not yet any end of key stage data to measure the attainment of pupils who benefit from the pupil premium in comparison to that of other pupils in the school. However, pupils who currently benefit from the pupil premium are making similar progress to others in the school in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Notable strengths in teaching across all classes are the good relationships between teachers and pupils, which promote pupils' good attitudes to learning and their willingness to have a go and take risks in their learning. Pupils have lots of opportunities to discuss their ideas and thoughts with each other and teachers prompt pupils with good questions to help extend thinking and learning.
- Activities are well planned to meet the interests and needs of pupils, and teachers' careful consideration of activities within themes and topics has a positive impact on engaging boys and girls in learning. For example, boys in Years 3 and 4 were particularly enthusiastic about their topic on Romans and boys in a 'Maths Masters' booster lesson were motivated and determined to find the cheapest way of equipping a football team.
- Where teaching is outstanding, teachers expect the most from pupils and ensure there is a rapid pace to learning and that pupils are very clear about the purpose of their learning. For example,

pupils in Year 1 made excellent progress in follow-up activities from their recent trip to London. Their first-hand experience promoted outstanding progress in writing alternative endings to the story '*Katie in London*' and in writing to persuade others to visit London. Pupils in the language centre made good gains in mathematics learning as a result of outstanding teaching that met their needs exceptionally well, with excellent use of resources.

- Although good overall, many lessons have some elements of outstanding teaching. However, where teaching is less effective, expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always high enough and so on occasion, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- The inclusive ethos of the school ensures that all groups, including disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs and those from different cultures and backgrounds, are fully included and have equal access to the same learning opportunities thus ensuring that there is no discrimination.
- Marking of pupils' work is consistent and informative and pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach their targets. They are given opportunities to reflect on their work and progress and think about how it could be improved.
- Skilled teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and are well briefed by teachers.
- Children in the Reception class Early Years Foundation Stage have positive learning experiences and a broad range of exciting opportunities to play and learn.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' good achievement. Behaviour is often outstanding, especially where teaching fully engages pupils. On a very few occasions, however, some pupils can become distracted and inattentive when they are not as focused as they might be on their learning.
- Almost all parents agree that their children feel safe in school and that behaviour is good.
- Pupils are polite and friendly and enthusiastic about school. They have good attitudes to learning and want to do well. Attendance is average.
- The school is a calm, happy place to be, where pupils feel safe and secure and supported well by all adults. The Year 6 pupils, who were taking their national tests during the inspection, demonstrated this to good effect. They appreciated the special breakfast session arranged for them and told inspectors that they felt very well supported by adults and well prepared to sit the tests.
- Pupils know how to keep safe on the internet and say the school helps them understand how to keep safe out of school, for example understanding issues around 'stranger danger' and safety on the roads.
- Pupils say they are not aware of any bullying in school because 'it is not allowed'. They understand the differences between friends just 'falling out' and bullying and that bullying can take different forms such as name calling, physical or prejudiced-based bullying or cyber bullying. Pupils are confident to turn to adults should any incidents arise and feel that adults would sort out any problems quickly and fairly.
- The daily breakfast club provides pupils with the opportunity to have a healthy breakfast, socialise with friends and be physically active by playing together in a safe environment before school. This prepares them well for learning during the day.
- Pupils enjoy their responsibilities, which help with the smooth running of the school day. Older pupils are trained to help and mentor younger pupils, especially at break and lunchtimes in the playground.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very well led by the headteacher. His high expectations and ambition, shared by all leaders including governors, very effectively drive school improvement. Staff and pupils are inspired and motivated to do their best and parents and staff express great confidence in the leadership of the school.
- Leaders and managers have a very clear idea of the strengths and priorities for development as a result of very detailed, rigorous and accurate monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance.
- The roles of key leaders are well defined and leaders at all levels make a positive contribution to whole-school improvement as well as providing skills and expertise in their particular areas of responsibility. There is a very strong culture of support and shared expertise.
- The quality of teaching is regularly checked, as is the performance of all staff. Support and training is given if weaknesses are identified, with a clear expectation of improvement. Targets are set for teachers that are linked well with the progress pupils make and teachers know they are accountable for pupils' progress and that this is linked to pay and salary progression.
- The school is constantly seeking to ensure that the subjects and topics taught inspire and motivate pupils' learning and they are well planned and matched to the needs of the pupils. There is appropriate emphasis to learning basic skills and an impressive range of additional activities that greatly enrich pupils' experiences and skills. For example, the 'Duke of West Malling Award' is a successful and innovative idea that involves pupils and parents in challenges that enrich pupils' learning and foster independence.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted very well and underpins all that the school does. The school's ethos of care and support and valuing and including all pupils demonstrates its commitment to securing equal opportunities for all.
- Since becoming an academy, the school has demonstrated that it is maintaining and further improving the good outcomes and provision for pupils as reported in the last inspection of the predecessor school, demonstrating the capacity for further improvement.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a good balance of skills, experience and expertise and holds the school to account well for its performance. Governors are very active in supporting the school and in giving appropriate challenge to school leaders. They undertake regular monitoring visits which are linked to the school's priorities for improvement and ensure that spending decisions are linked to these priorities and monitored for their impact. Governors know the school well and have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and how the school's standards compare with those of other schools nationally. There is a good understanding of the quality of teaching and the impact on pupils' learning. Governors are involved in the decision making to reward good teaching and in tackling any underperformance. Effective performance management systems are in place to ensure that teachers and the headteacher fully meet their responsibilities and targets. The governing body evaluates the data on pupils' progress to check that all groups achieve equally well. Governors have a good knowledge of the use of the pupil premium and agree on how it is spent, for example to fund the families and community manager to provide very effective support to those pupils who may be vulnerable and their families, and additional staffing to provide extra support for pupils. They review the difference this makes to the progress of these pupils. The governing body ensures statutory duties are met, including those for safeguarding.

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	138737
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	411775

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Academy converter
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Veitch
Headteacher	Darren Webb
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01732 842061
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