

Westlands Primary School

Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 1XN

Inspection dates 11–12 December 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Inadequate	4
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that has serious weaknesses. It is not good because

- Too many pupils make inadequate progress, so that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 is consistently low.
- Teaching is inadequate. Teaching over time has not been good enough to ensure that all groups of pupils learn the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Too much teaching requires improvement.
- A legacy of weak teaching means that there are significant gaps in pupils' learning which continue to hamper their progress.
- Teachers' expectations are not consistently high enough and the work set for pupils is not always matched well enough to pupils' needs.
- Some pupils lose concentration in lessons when the work set is too easy or too difficult and when the teachers do not require them to pay enough attention.
- Attendance rates are too low, despite recent improvements.
- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders and managers, including the governing body, have not been successful in improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching until very recently.

The school has the following strengths

- The school's leaders, managers and governors know what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement and have the expertise needed to make the necessary improvements.
- Recent improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress demonstrate the school's ability to bring about further developments.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving and pupils are generally polite. They feel very safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 22 lessons or part lessons, including 15 lesson observations completed jointly with the principal, executive headteacher or interim headteacher.
- Discussions were held with the principal, executive headteacher, interim headteacher, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body, senior leaders, teachers, members of staff, parents and pupils.
- Inspectors took account of 22 responses to the on-line Parent View survey, school questionnaires completed by parents during the summer term 2013, and 48 staff questionnaire responses.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and analysed a range of documents and policies, including the school improvement plan, information about pupils' progress, attendance records and the safeguarding policy and procedures.
- Inspectors looked at a sample of pupils' work and listened to pupils reading.

Inspection team

Julie Sackett, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Carol Vant	Additional Inspector
Fiona Robinson	Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than it might in all the circumstances reasonably be expected to perform.

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above the national average. (Pupil premium is additional funding provided by the government to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority and other groups.) In this school it applies to those pupils eligible for free school meals and children looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups and the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils who have special educational needs supported through school action, and the proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are both above average.
- The school converted to academy status on 1 September 2010. In October 2013, the senior leadership team was restructured and the governing body was replaced. The principal oversees all the schools in the trust. The executive headteacher has recent experience of headship in an outstanding primary school in another authority and provides training at Westlands Primary to improve the quality of teaching. The headteacher of a successful primary school in the trust has been appointed interim headteacher.
- There is a breakfast club on site which is managed by the school and was included in this inspection.
- The school does not meet the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching to raise pupils' achievement by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have consistently high expectations for the quality of pupils' work and for their behaviour, especially during lessons
 - teachers use information about pupils' progress to plan work which is matched to the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils, including the most able
 - lessons are delivered at a brisk pace so that pupils stay motivated and are able to complete more work
 - pupils are given more opportunities to use their mathematical knowledge to solve problems in mathematics lessons and in different subjects
 - pupils are taught how to edit and improve their written work
 - pupils are given more opportunities to explain their ideas and learning orally in lessons to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - teachers' high expectations of pupils' written work in English are as high in all other subjects, including the quality of marking of work in other subjects
 - there are more opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from existing good practice in the school.
- Build on recent improvements in attendance so that pupils' attendance is at least in line with the

national average.

- Strengthen the role played by leaders at all levels to bring about further improvements by:
 - involving governors in checking the school’s effectiveness and in identifying priorities for further improvement
 - fully embedding recent improvements in the role played by middle leaders in checking and developing the quality of teaching in their subjects and areas
 - improving communication with parents and increasing opportunities for parents to be more involved in their children’s learning.

An external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school’s use of the pupil premium, should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is inadequate

- Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has been inadequate for too long. A culture of low expectations means that pupils do not make enough progress over time. The pace of teaching is too slow and the work set for pupils is not challenging enough. Gaps in pupils' knowledge mean pupils are not prepared well enough for the next stage in their education.
- Children's knowledge, skills and understanding when the children enter Reception are below those expected for their age, particularly in speaking and listening skills. In the past, systems to check on children's progress have not been rigorous enough to establish an accurate view of their progress in Reception. However, recent improvements in these systems show that children are currently making good progress.
- Pupils do not make enough progress as they move through the school. Attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 is consistently low. A small improvement in standards at the end of Year 6 in 2012 was not sustained in 2013, when there was a further increase in the gap between pupils' attainment in the school and their peers nationally.
- Some pupils do not develop the speaking and communication skills necessary to prepare them for the next stage in their education. For example, in one lesson, some pupils struggled to explain how they had tackled a task because they lacked the necessary vocabulary, despite their eagerness to do so.
- Teachers' low expectations of the most able pupils mean that they make inadequate progress. Until very recently, weaknesses in the English and mathematics curriculum meant that pupils were not enabled to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for them to achieve their full potential. As a result, the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels is much lower than the national average.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium underachieve because teaching is not matched accurately enough to their needs. As a result, their attainment in 2013 was almost two years behind their peers nationally and about a year behind their classmates in mathematics, reading and writing. This gap increased in 2013.
- School leaders respond appropriately to any incidents of discrimination. Disabled pupils, those with special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make progress at similar rates to others in the school.
- Information about the progress made by pupils currently in the school and lesson observations indicate that the progress made by all groups of pupils has recently begun to accelerate rapidly, particularly in Years 5 and 6. This is because the curriculum for English and mathematics has been reviewed and updated to ensure pupils cover enough ground and teachers' expectations are much improved and rising. All groups of pupils, including the most able, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are receiving carefully targeted teaching which is successfully addressing gaps in pupils' learning.
- The school is focusing appropriately on developing pupils' basic mathematical and English skills and addressing gaps in pupils' knowledge. However, there are too few opportunities for pupils to strengthen their understanding by using their mathematical knowledge in problem-solving tasks. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their English skills by reviewing and improving their own work.

The quality of teaching

is inadequate

- Teaching has been weak for some time and this has resulted in pupils' inadequate progress. Expectations of pupils' capabilities have been too low and learning is not always matched well enough to pupils' different needs, so that the work set for pupils is too easy for some or too difficult for others. There is not yet enough consistently good or better teaching across the school to ensure that pupils make more rapid progress and to make up for lost time.

- Expectations of pupils' written work in different subjects are not high enough. A scrutiny of pupils' work showed that increased expectations of the quality and quantity of work completed, which is evident in pupils' English books, were not applied in other subjects. For example, in pupils' topic books there were too many examples of unfinished work and basic spelling and grammatical errors were not corrected. Pupils are not given enough opportunities in English lessons to put their English skills into practice by reviewing and improving their written work.
- Rigorous procedures for tracking pupils' progress have been established and regular meetings with senior leaders ensure that assessment information is being used by teachers more regularly to plan work which is appropriate for pupils' differing abilities.
- There are too few planned opportunities in lessons for pupils to talk about their ideas and learning with their classmates and to the whole class. As a result, pupils are not developing the speaking and listening skills necessary to equip them for future learning.
- Teachers are eager to improve their practice and have welcomed the recent drive to improve teaching and raise pupils' achievement. As a result, the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. For example, in Reception, teachers have followed advice to develop children's ability to work on their own and to raise achievement by making better use of the outdoor area. As a result, children are more interested in learning and their progress is accelerating.
- The use of small-group work to meet pupils' needs more closely is successfully increasing pupils' aspirations and accelerating their progress. For example, a pupil in Year 6 told inspectors that she thoroughly enjoys the extra literacy work and proudly commented that her group is 'working towards Level 5'.
- Recent training means that teaching assistants now play a more confident and active role in lessons so that the pupils they work with, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, make similar progress to their peers.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- Behaviour is not good because some pupils lose concentration during lessons when the expectations of behaviour are too low and when there is a mismatch between the work set and pupils' abilities. When this occurs, some pupils quietly stop working, whilst others become unsettled and chatty, so that noise levels rise and progress slows. This view was endorsed by one pupil who commented, 'Some people let us down in lessons by being silly – but lots are good, too!'
- Pupils feel very safe in school and most parents who responded to Parent View agree. Pupils are appreciative of recent developments, such as key pads on the doors, to ensure their safety.
- Pupils know what bullying is and the older pupils know about the different forms that it can take, such as racism and cyber bullying. They told inspectors that incidents of bullying happen occasionally but are dealt with successfully by adults.
- Attendance is below average, despite recent improvements, and this has a negative effect on pupils' learning. The breakfast club provides a secure and caring start to the school day for those pupils who attend and has made a valuable contribution to improving pupils' punctuality.
- Pupils' behaviour is improving, a fact recognised by those pupils who spoke with inspectors. One pupil said, 'Teachers are stricter than they used to be and we have to buckle down to work!'
- Pupils generally behave well in the playground and around the school, although a few talked of being occasionally bumped by pupils playing rough games during break times. Relationships between pupils are good and they cooperate with each other well during lessons.
- Pupils wear their uniform with pride and visitors are warmly welcomed. The large majority of parents who responded to Parent View consider pupils to be well behaved.

The leadership and management

require improvement

- The school has introduced some changes very recently to ensure that the decline in pupils'

achievement is arrested. Half of the parents who responded to Parent View expressed concerns about how well the school is led and managed, and a minority felt that the school did not respond well to their concerns. However, parents who spoke to inspectors were very positive about the school. The school rightly recognises that more needs to be done to ensure parents are more fully engaged in their children's learning and better informed about developments.

- In the past, systems for checking pupils' progress have been too unwieldy, so that teachers and leaders have had little idea how well pupils are progressing or which pupils were falling behind.
- Recent improvements demonstrate the school's more secure ability to improve. The directors of the trust have taken robust action following a further decline in attainment in 2013. Expertise within the trust is being used flexibly to successfully drive improvements.
- The quality of teaching has recently begun to improve because senior leaders know exactly what needs to be done to bring about improvements. The highly experienced team of senior leaders works alongside teachers to enable them to review and improve their teaching. Leaders have rightly identified the need to provide more opportunities for teachers to observe each other so that they can learn from the most effective teaching in the school. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and the quality of teaching is improving rapidly. Teachers have a better understanding of what is expected of them and are more accountable for pupils' achievement.
- Leaders are firmly committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all pupils and recognise that not enough has been done in the past to quickly address gaps in pupils' learning. Plans for improvement identify the right priorities to raise achievement. Staff questionnaires show that teachers share the leaders' drive to secure further improvements.
- Until recently, middle leaders were not given responsibility for improving the quality of teaching in their areas and their role in school development has been ineffective. Middle leaders demonstrate confident subject knowledge and know what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning in their areas, have time allocated to complete checks on pupils' progress and teaching, and are more accountable. They have introduced some carefully considered initiatives in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, pupils' confidence in the use of basic number, reading and writing skills is growing and their progress is accelerating.
- Sports funding is being used appropriately to extend the range of sports taught in the school and a specialist coach is working alongside teachers to improve the teaching of sport. Weekly swimming lessons for pupils in Years 1 to 6 ensure that pupils develop confidence in the water and know how to behave safely. Almost all pupils are able to swim competently by the time they leave Year 6.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- In the past, the governing body has not done enough to challenge the school and to hold it to account for pupils' achievement. Governors know that, previously, the governing body was too accepting of information provided by the school so that its view of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching has been inaccurate. In the past, governors lacked a sufficiently clear view of performance management systems and how good teaching is rewarded. Recent visits to the school by the Chair and Vice Chair have ensured that they are developing a secure overview of the quality of teaching and are well informed of performance management procedures. Recent training has ensured that the newly re-formed governing body has a full and accurate view of pupils' achievement and how it compares with pupils nationally. However, governors have not yet been involved in reviewing the school's effectiveness or in planning for future developments. Governors know how financial resources, including pupil premium funding, are spent. However, they recognise that they need to develop a more precise view of how well these initiatives are improving pupils' achievement. Safeguarding systems and procedures are rigorous and meet statutory requirements.

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	136270
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	426533

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	451
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Keith Woolley
Principal	Jon Whitcombe
Date of previous school inspection	11 January 2013
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