

West Minster Primary School

St George's Avenue, Sheerness, Kent, ME12 1ET

Inspection dates

3–4 December 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The progress pupils make is uneven across the year groups, classes and subjects.
- Standards reached by pupils in national tests by the end of Year 6 in writing do not match those in reading or mathematics. Gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally have yet to be closed in writing.
- Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 remain significantly below average, although they have improved since the last inspection. Not enough pupils reach the higher levels.
- Teaching is not yet consistently good enough to ensure all pupils achieve well.
- Pupils are not always sure how to use the guidance teachers give them to improve their work. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' comments in pupils' books between classes and subjects. This hinders the progress pupils in some classes make.
- Information on how well pupils are doing is not consistently used to plan work that stretches and extends pupils. When this happens, some pupils have to complete work that is too easy before they move on to work at a more appropriate level.
- The quality of adults' questioning to deepen pupils' understanding and move on their learning varies.

The school has the following strengths

- Current leaders at all levels, including governors, are very committed to, and active in, raising achievement. Since taking up their posts, they have acted decisively, strengthening their effectiveness and rigorously tackling widespread weaknesses in teaching.
- Pupils and parents agree that behaviour is good. Incidences of poor behaviour and exclusions have fallen while attendance continues to rise. The school's work to keep pupils safe is good. Pupils say they feel safe and well looked after.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Staff focus on ensuring they have the personal and social skills they need as well as developing their speaking and listening skills so they are ready to learn in Year 1.
- Standards are rising, due to increasingly effective teaching. Information about pupils' progress is used well to check no pupils or groups of pupils are underachieving.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because adults know them well and set work that matches their needs.
- At the end of Year 6 in 2014, the gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally closed in reading and writing.
- Strong teaching in Year 6 accelerated pupils' progress and enabled them to make good progress from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 in 2014.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all classes. They observed 18 lessons and part lessons, most jointly with the executive headteacher, head of school or acting assistant head of school.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' work in lessons and in their books. They talked to pupils and observed pupils' behaviour in lessons, around school and in the playgrounds.
- Discussions were held with leaders, teachers, other members of staff and members of the governing body. The lead inspector met with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a number of school documents, including: the school's plans for improvement; its use of the primary school sports funding and pupil premium funding; and information about the standards and progress of pupils across the school. Inspectors checked: the school's arrangements for keeping pupils safe; behaviour logs; procedures for dealing with complaints; and systems to set targets for staff. They reviewed the school's website, which was under construction during the inspection.
- The views of parents were taken into account by looking at the school's most recent survey carried out this term. Inspectors also spoke to a number of parents informally at the start and end of the day. Insufficient responses to the online Parent View questionnaire were received to analyse.
- Staff views were considered by analysing the 45 inspection questionnaires completed by them as well as through discussions with staff throughout the inspection.

Inspection team

Jacqueline Marshall, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Susan Senior	Additional Inspector
Bryan Meyer	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- West Minster is a larger than average-sized primary school. Most pupils are of White British origin. Together with Rose Street Primary School, it forms the Sheerness West Federation. The federation has an executive headteacher and a single governing body. Each school has its own head of school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average. The pupil premium is additional government funding provided to give extra support to disadvantaged pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and to children who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school has a Nursery class, where children attend part time, and two Reception classes. Children in the Reception class share a large open-plan classroom and attend full time.
- There have been significant changes to teaching staff and school leaders since the previous inspection. The executive headteacher was appointed at Easter 2013. Along with the head of school and acting assistant head of school, he actively took up his post in September 2013. Almost all the middle leaders and just under half the teaching staff were appointed since then.
- The executive headteacher is a national leader of education (NLE). His main focus currently is to support the work of the federation as well as other schools on the Isle of Sheppey.
- Two breakfast clubs, one for Reception children and one for other pupils in the school, are held each morning.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Secure consistently good teaching, and so raise achievement, by making sure that:
 - the questions that all adults ask encourage pupils to answer in full, both stretching and deepening their understanding
 - pupils, especially the most able, are given work to complete that takes account of what they can already do
 - comments written in pupils' books and given verbally enable pupils to understand how to improve their work and they are supported to do this.
- Raise standards in writing by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged to achieve the levels they are capable of throughout the school
 - leaders identifying and sharing the good practice that successfully closed the gaps between disadvantaged pupils and their peers nationally in reading and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The highly effective executive headteacher has galvanised the school since his appointment, using his expertise as an NLE to good effect. He is supported very ably by the head of school and acting assistant headteacher in his aspirations. Together they have created an atmosphere where there is an overwhelming drive from staff and governors to bring about improvements in teaching and learning. Staff say they are 'extremely proud' and 'part of a team'. They highlight that this team has made 'lots of positive changes' and 'everyone shares the same desire to keep improving'.
- Developing the role and effectiveness of leaders at all levels has been key to their successes so far. Training at a national level was provided and warmly welcomed. Middle leaders and subject leaders now have clearly defined roles linked to school improvement. They use checks on pupils' progress, observations of teaching, scrutiny of pupils' work and discussions with staff and pupils effectively to pinpoint what needs to improve. Consequently they have a good understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie and take actions promptly to make further improvements.
- Leaders have used the introduction of the New National Curriculum to ensure that a broad range of subjects are taught across the school. They link work in different subjects effectively to different themes, such as 'The Deep Blue Sea' and 'Once Upon a Time', to increase pupils' engagement and interest in their learning. Standards in reading and mathematics are improving as a result of leaders' actions. A successful focus on checking the effectiveness of how additional funds are spent has ensured gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils have closed in some areas. Standards in writing, however, remain stubbornly low. Current development plans have a strong focus on writing both in lessons and as part of staff training across the federation. This is part of the drive to ensure equality of opportunity and that all pupils achieve well across all subjects.
- Leaders at all levels contribute to improving the quality of teaching effectively in order to raise achievement. Senior leaders took decisive and timely action to address widespread weaknesses in teaching. They set targets for teachers to develop and work alongside them, demonstrating best practice. As a result, inadequate teaching was eradicated and an increasing proportion of teaching is now good. However, they are fully aware that this is not yet a consistent picture across the school and more is required to secure good teaching and progress.
- Across the federation, leaders and staff now work together purposefully. Teams of leaders, such as the two leaders responsible for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and the family liaison staff, support pupils and families very effectively. They pool their expertise, support each other's work and share ideas and what works well. As a result, achievement for these pupils and overall attendance are rising.
- The local authority has provided timely and effective help for the school since the last inspection. For example, it gave support as the school secured its current leadership team and provides training for staff identified by the school to improve teaching and learning.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is fully supportive of the school and federation's drive to improve. They seek to develop their effectiveness through regular training and appreciated the local authority's support during periods of staff turbulence. They back the executive headteacher's commitment to strengthening the ties across the federation. They appreciate the benefits that this, and increased links with other local schools on the Isle of Sheppey, bring to the school's overall effectiveness.
 - Governors take steps to find out for themselves about how the school is doing. They seek their own first hand evidence rather than relying solely on information from senior leaders in order to hold the school to account. Governors challenged leaders to provide them with more detailed information about the difference additional funding had made to disadvantaged pupils' achievement, attendance and behaviour. They are aware of the strengths of the school and the areas it is working to improve and know how the school's results compare with the national figures.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the link between the quality of teaching and the outcomes for pupils. They know where the strengths lie and that leaders will take swift action to deal with any weaknesses. They are fully aware that any increases in teachers' pay link closely to pupils' achievement.
 - Governors check the school's financial position carefully to make sure that resources, particularly additional funding, are used to best effect. They know how the primary sports funding has been spent to appoint specialist sports teachers, increase the range of sports and activities that are on offer and develop the use of local facilities, such as the dance studio. However, they have not yet fully evaluated the impact of this additional funding on, for example, pupils' expertise, participation and enjoyment.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils show positive attitudes to learning in most classes, particularly where teachers plan activities that are engaging. As pupils move through the school, they rely less on being told how to behave well and make these choices independently themselves. Sometimes, for example where younger pupils rely on adults' reminders to keep focused, pupils' attention drifts, they become chatty and learning is less effective.
- Pupils listen well to instructions in lessons and complete their work to the best of their ability. They take a pride in their work and their school. Pupils undertake duties, for example as school councillors, and contribute well to the smooth running of the school. Children in the early years quickly learn the rules and routines, cheerfully taking part in the 'rubbish race' at the end of sessions to help keep their classroom tidy.
- Inappropriate behaviour and exclusions have fallen and are now unusual occurrences. Pupils behave well as they move around the buildings, in the hall at lunch times and at break times. Training is planned for lunchtime staff to ensure that lunch play is as successful and free from incidents as in the morning and afternoon. Thorough records of any incidents are maintained. Pupils realise that their actions may affect others.
- Pupils welcome pupils from all backgrounds and get along at playtimes and in lessons. This is because provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are well prepared for the diversity of life and the importance of listening to each others' views in modern British democratic society. For example, Year 4 pupils explained how they used what they learnt on restorative justice to help restore their own friendships when they occasionally fell out.
- Pupils' attendance has risen and is currently at the national average. Leaders and adults across the school work well with families and pupils to understand the importance of frequent attendance and punctuality.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Leaders ensure that the school is secure and staff are closely checked prior to appointment. Safeguarding arrangements meet national requirements.
- The breakfast club provides well for pupils who arrive in school early.
- Pupils know that risks exist, including cyber bullying. The school works hard to enable pupils to protect themselves in such circumstances.
- While a very small minority of parents have some concerns about the school's response to bullying, most are happy with the school's procedures and how complaints are dealt with. Pupils know that bullying is unacceptable and that it may take different forms. They are confident that adults will manage any difficulties that arise and say they feel safe in the school.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching over time has not enabled pupils to make consistently good progress and reach the standards of which they are capable, particularly in writing. Tasks have not always provided sufficient challenge to accelerate the progress of all pupils. As whole-school priorities have raised standards in reading and mathematics, teaching has not until recently focused on the development of pupils' writing skills. Although this is improving and opportunities for writing have increased in the current year, there is still a legacy of relatively slow progress.
- The quality of teaching across year groups and classes is variable, leading to pupils' patchy progress as they move through the school. Weaker teaching in the past led to gaps in pupils' knowledge and some pupils who had fallen behind. However, staff changes over the last year in particular have secured a much higher proportion of good teaching. This is now having a positive impact on pupils' progress.
- Pupils learn well where staff use good questioning skills. When this happens, pupils are unable to answer with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. They are encouraged to answer in full, demonstrating their understanding or enabling staff to see where extra help is required. Not all staff are as skilled and so miss opportunities to stretch pupils further, hindering their learning.
- Strong teaching and very good subject knowledge across the Year 6 team have accelerated these pupils' progress. Teachers group pupils and provide work to best meet their needs and consequently in 2014 achievement rose and pupils achieved well from their starting points. However, this good practice is not

yet the norm across the school. Leaders have ensured that skilled and successful teachers work in partnership with those in need of further development in order to strengthen teaching further.

- While disadvantaged pupils, those with disabilities and those with special educational needs are now making mostly good progress as a result of the effective support they receive, this is not the case for the most able pupils. These pupils are at times expected to complete work they can already do before they are able to move on to harder work that stretches them to achieve their best.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work well together in classes to share information on how well pupils are doing. Systems are now used by all teachers to check pupils' progress and plan additional support to help them catch up if they are at risk of falling behind. This has been successful in making sure support provided by teaching assistants is then precisely targeted. Any support is regularly evaluated to make sure pupils have improved.
- All teachers mark pupils' work regularly. Pupils are encouraged in some classes to respond to teachers' comments and are able to explain clearly how they have done so to improve their work. However, this is not yet consistent practice and learning slows where pupils do not take steps to make the necessary improvements to their work. A current whole-school emphasis on developing pupils' responses to guidance is increasing the effectiveness of the impact of both verbal and written feedback through training and sharing best practice.
- The school has a consistent approach to the setting of homework. Tasks are thoroughly completed and marked and contribute well to pupils' learning.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards over time at both Key Stages 1 and 2 have been low. In 2014, the majority of pupils left Year 6 with attainment broadly in line with the latest national averages in reading and mathematics, but below the national average in writing. Standards overall, although improving year on year, remain low at Key Stage 1 and low in writing at Key Stage 2.
- Typically, pupils have, over time, made varied progress across year groups, classes and subjects as a result of weaker teaching. More consistently good teaching over the last year, and current improvements in the quality of pupils' written work, together indicate that progress is beginning to accelerate.
- Although improving from 2013, fewer pupils reached the higher levels in 2014, particularly by the end of Year 2. The most able pupils in Year 6 receive well-targeted and challenging work, especially in mathematics, that ensures they achieve well. However, this is not a consistent picture across the school. As a result, some work lacks sufficient challenge to make sure the most able are working at the higher levels of which they are capable.
- The needs of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are accurately identified. As a result of the effective support from the special educational needs leader, they receive good support from their class teachers and other adults. Support is provided where it is most needed and, wherever possible, without providing additional help outside the classroom. As a result, these pupils achieve well.
- Pupils enjoy reading and talk about which books and authors they most enjoy. Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the linking of sounds and letters) is improving. In 2013, while the results of the phonics check in Year 1 matched the national level overall, some groups did not do as well as others, including boys and disadvantaged pupils. In 2014, results surpassed the national levels, with all groups achieving well. Pupils increasingly use these phonics skills successfully in subsequent years to help when they are stuck in reading unfamiliar words.
- In 2014, the attainment in reading, mathematics, grammar, punctuation and spelling of disadvantaged pupils in the school in Year 6 exceeded that of similar pupils nationally by between four and six months. Gaps between the achievement of this group and their peers both nationally and in school remain, though they are closing in all but writing. Disadvantaged Year 6 pupils in the school were approximately six months behind in reading and four in mathematics, while the gap stretched to a year in writing. Across the school, these pupils increasingly make good progress because of the well-targeted support they receive.

The early years provision

is good

- The quality of education in the Reception and Nursery classes has remained good since the last inspection.
- Most children enter the Nursery without the skills that are typical for their age. They make good progress in key areas during their time in the Nursery. This is because of the wide range of activities that are provided to build their understanding and enable them to learn well.
- Not all children start at West Minster in the Nursery. Some join in the Reception Year and not all have had

experience of pre-school learning. Consequently, many of those children start with skills and understanding lower than is typical for their age. Children make good progress during their time in Reception. The majority start in Year 1 ready and well prepared to learn.

- Children show self-sufficiency when selecting resources and settling down to activities. They build positive attitudes to learning because of the strong focus on developing children's personal and social skills. They get on well together and know that it is important to share and take turns. They know that some of the rules and routines are there to keep them safe.
- The early years leader constantly reviews the areas of learning to ensure that children are effectively challenged to achieve well, including those who have special educational needs. The staff know individual children well through thorough checks and observations. They maintain a good balance between activities led by the teacher and those the children choose themselves.
- While all staff are adept at using questions to extend children's concentration, not all have the same level of skill when using them to extend their learning. They do not always use the information they have about children's knowledge to stretch them further. Children are not always encouraged to answer questions in full or give their reasoning behind their answer.
- Good links are established with parents, who have a positive involvement with the school.

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	118438
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	448949

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	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jim Duncan
Headteacher	Steven Connors (Executive headteacher), Hazel Brewer (Head of School)
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 December 2012
Telephone number	01795 662178
Fax number	01795 581853
Email address	executive.headteacher@sheernesswestfederation.org.uk

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.



You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store St
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2014

