

Inspection of a good school: Westcourt Primary School

Silver Road, Gravesend, Kent DA12 4JG

Inspection dates:

26–27 November 2019

Outcome

Westcourt Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Westcourt is a friendly, welcoming school. Pupils love coming to the school and feel happy here. Pupils and staff get on well together. Pupils and their parents and carers appreciate the care and kindness of the headteacher and the staff, who are good role models for the pupils. Pupils display these qualities towards each other. They work and play together very well.

Staff have high expectations for pupils. Leaders are committed to making sure that every child who attends the school is valued and encouraged to do the best they can. A parent commented, 'I can see that every child feels important.' Pupils have positive attitudes to learning. In lessons, they listen carefully to each other and to their teachers. They love sharing and learning from each other. Pupils are confident to try new things and have a go, as they are not afraid to make mistakes.

The school is a calm, orderly haven for pupils. Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Pupils feel safe and well looked after. Pupils say that there is no bullying. They feel that, if anything did happen, they could talk to staff, who would listen and deal with any issues quickly and fairly.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Determined leadership from the headteacher, senior leaders and trust members ensures that the school continues to provide a good quality of education. Leaders make sure that pupils enjoy rich learning opportunities across a range of subjects. The knowledge and skills that pupils need to learn are well organised in subject plans. This means that teachers know what to teach and when, so that pupils learn well.

Pupils like the challenges they are set but, occasionally, work is too easy for some. Leaders are determined that the most able pupils could do even better, so that more reach the higher standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well. They have the same opportunities to learn as others.

Teachers build pupils' confidence. Pupils are proud of their achievements. For example, they were proud to know their times tables and understand about different types of mountains in geography. Children in the Nursery were very pleased that they could count out five blocks and make different shapes with them. In the Reception Year, children were adding numbers such as 25 and three using their own 'adding machine'. Teachers in all classes give pupils lots of opportunities to talk together to develop their speech and vocabulary across the curriculum. Strategies to help pupils remember what they know, in order to help them learn new knowledge, are not as strong in all classes as they are in some.

Reading has a very high profile in the school. Phonics teaching is well planned, organised and structured. Children in the Nursery are encouraged to listen to sounds all around them. They are ready to move on with phonics as soon as they start in the Reception Year. Children are read to every day, and a love of reading is fostered right from the start. Pupils are given effective extra support to catch up if they are not learning as quickly or as well as they should.

Pupils' love of reading continues as they get older. They pick up on teachers' enthusiasm for reading. A group of pupils agreed that: 'Reading takes you to another world. If you don't like reading, it means you haven't found the right book.' Books are chosen carefully to capture pupils' interest and link learning across the curriculum. Pupils thoroughly enjoy the online interactive reading programme. This helps them practise reading and develop comprehension skills. Pupils understand how reading can improve the quality of their writing and vocabulary. One pupil said: 'Instead of using 'sad' you could use 'melancholy'.'

Pupils show respect and tolerance. They appreciate and understand that sometimes pupils have different needs to others. They are accepting of this in lessons and around the school. Teachers work hard to expand pupils' horizons. Pupils' lives are enriched by visitors to school and trips out. These help raise their aspirations and self-esteem. Pupils in Year 6, for example, were full of enthusiasm about their trip to a pizza restaurant. 'We learned so much about all sorts of things', was the agreed comment from the pupils, and the trip also inspired a few to become chefs.

Staff work as a strong, supportive team. They say that leaders care about their well-being and are mindful of teachers' workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority for the school. Training is up to date for all staff. Procedures are well known, and staff know what to do if they have a concern. Pupils and parents agree that the school keeps pupils safe. Record-keeping is rigorous. Leaders liaise well with external agencies. All the required checks are made on adults in the school. Risk assessments are carried out for trips and for the school site during the building work. Leaders, including governors, are relentless in their work to improve attendance. Improvements have been made, but absence remains above the national average.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have organised the curriculum so that most pupils successfully build their skills and knowledge over time. However, the expectations for most-able pupils' achievement are not always high enough. Leaders need to forge ahead with their plans to ensure that work is pitched sufficiently well and tasks are demanding, so that more of the most able pupils achieve highly.
- Leaders have identified that sometimes pupils struggle to remember and retain what they have learned. This can make it more difficult for these pupils to learn new ideas and build on their previous learning. The successful strategies to support and encourage pupils to remember what they know and to draw on their previous knowledge are not as strong in some classes as they are in others. Leaders need to ensure that pupils are consistently very clear about the focus of their learning, to help them know, remember and understand more over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good school or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that the school could now be better than good or that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the predecessor school Westcourt Primary School to be good on 7–8 March 2013.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	144005
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10111238
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of governing body	Mrs Carol Winn
Headteacher	Miss Mags Sexton
Website	www.westcourt.kent.sch.uk/
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- Westcourt Primary School converted to become an academy school on 1 February 2017. When its predecessor school, also called Westcourt Primary, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be good overall.
- The school is a member of the Primary First Trust.
- The headteacher was previously the deputy headteacher at the predecessor school and then became the acting headteacher of the academy in September 2017. She became the substantive headteacher in February 2018.
- Building works are taking place to facilitate the expansion of the school into two classes in every year group. Currently there are two classes in the Reception Year and Years 1, 2 and 3 and one class in each of the other year groups.

Information about this inspection

- I held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher and the special educational needs coordinator.
- I held meetings with the chair and vice-chair of the governing body and the chief executive officer of the trust.

- I did deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics and geography. For each of these subjects, I met with curriculum leaders, carried out lesson visits, looked at pupils' work and spoke to pupils and teachers from lessons visited.
- I spoke to pupils in and out of lessons. I also met with groups of pupils formally to talk about their learning and heard some pupils read.
- I reviewed the school's safeguarding arrangements. I met with the school's designated safeguarding leads and scrutinised the school's single central record. I looked at records, including case files, and spoke to pupils and staff.
- I took account of 128 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and five responses to Ofsted's staff survey.
- I took account of 21 responses to the Ofsted Parent View survey and 14 free-text responses.

Inspection team

Margaret Coussins, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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