

West Leigh Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114780
Local Authority	SOUTHEND-ON-SEA
Inspection number	290026
Inspection dates	15–16 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	359
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Donald Fraser
Headteacher	Mrs Lynn Gent
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	Ronald Hill Grove Leigh-on-Sea Essex SS9 2JB
Telephone number	01702 476610
Fax number	01702 714077

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

West Leigh Infant school is much larger than most infant schools. It serves the local area but has an increasing number of pupils from out of the catchment area. It is very popular and usually oversubscribed. Almost all pupils are White British with a small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pupils come from relatively advantaged backgrounds. Attainment on entry is above average. The numbers of children eligible for free school meals and who have learning difficulties or disabilities are much lower than those found nationally.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Leigh Infant is a good school. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. By the time they leave the school, standards are exceptionally high and similar to those in the top five per cent of schools in the country.

The school is correct in its judgement that it provides a good education underpinned by excellent care, guidance and support for its pupils. The headteacher, staff and governors have a strong and successful commitment to maintaining very high standards and have brought about good improvement since the last inspection. The school provides good value for money and has a good capacity to improve further. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school and have many good things to say about it. Pupils, too, are very happy with all the school has to offer and take pride in being a member of the school community. Their personal development is outstanding. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe and demonstrate an outstandingly good knowledge of what constitutes 'healthy eating' by their choices of snacks and school dinners. Even though outside activity space is very limited, pupils have ample opportunities to take part in physical activities and sport. Pupils know how to keep themselves fit and are pleased with their outstanding accomplishments in swimming. Social skills, including good manners, develop exceptionally well. A notable feature in the cramped classrooms and play areas is pupils' care and respect for one another. Older pupils develop their leadership skills and take responsibilities seriously, for example when they are 'playground friends'. These qualities, together with high levels of skill in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), prepare them exceptionally well for their future.

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. Even though this is a large school, each pupil is known particularly well, valued and cared for. The welfare assistant provides outstanding care for pupils and their families. As one parent wrote, 'I could not ask for someone more loving and caring to look after my son when he is unwell'. Pupils say they feel extremely safe and are very confident that, if they should have a concern, it will be dealt with immediately by an adult. Within this caring environment, pupils thoroughly enjoy school life and demonstrate this by their good attendance and excellent behaviour. Teaching is good and based on a good curriculum where interesting links between subjects are beginning to be made. Pupils are very positive about learning and work hard in lessons. There are times, however, in the over-long morning sessions when their concentration, understandably, flags.

Provision in the Reception classes is good and matched well to children's varying abilities when they start school. They make good progress, especially in becoming independent and in learning letter sounds.

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher and governors have continued to provide a clear direction for the school and sustain high standards. Good systems are in place to monitor the work of the school so that senior staff and governors are well aware of its strengths and areas to improve. Currently, though, there are not enough formal records of monitoring which can be used to keep a close eye on the progress made towards improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- Help pupils maintain concentration by allowing them a break in the first session of the day.
- Make more formal records of the evaluation of the school's work so that progress towards improvements can be checked on rigorously.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

From their start in Reception, children make good progress which continues as they move through the school. Pupils achieve well. From above average starting points, standards attained at the end of Year 2 are consistently well above average and in 2006 were exceptionally high and similar to the top five per cent of schools in the country. Pupils use ICT skills capably in their work and standards are also well above average. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress as do those pupils at the early stages of Learning English. In Reception, the recently introduced method of teaching letter sounds is already having a significant impact. Children are making rapid progress in learning and using letter sounds to help them read and spell.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural understanding, is outstanding. The school is very successful in helping pupils learn and develop personal qualities and 'values' such as perseverance. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves, mean pupils are extremely happy in school and are enthusiastic about learning. Pupils feel that there is no bullying in the school and are very confident that should they have any worries any adult would deal with their concerns. They have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Visits from the police and firemen have helped them develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe. The good range of sporting and physical activities means that pupils have a really good idea of how to keep themselves fit. The school has been successful in inter-school sports competitions. School councillors have a good impact on school life. Links with the local community are outstanding and are in such areas as visiting homes for the elderly and planting trees and shrubs in a local park linked to Southend in Bloom. The school takes a very firm stance on encouraging good attendance.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Two key features of teaching are the excellent relationships and high expectations for pupils to work hard and achieve well. The work of the proficient learning support assistants is highly valued and they are an essential part of the teaching team. Literacy and numeracy skills are taught well although, in a few lessons, the time pupils are expected to sit and listen is too long which means they do not have enough time to get on with their work. Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils know and need to learn next and are good at encouraging pupils to assess their own learning. Excellent examples of helpful marking were noted but this is not yet consistent across the school. Teaching of basic literacy skills in Reception is good and leading to rapid learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils. The good range of clubs, including French, and sporting activities has a very good take up rate which promotes pupils' fitness and leadership skills very well. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good and meets the needs of more able children particularly well. The Year 1 'workshops' demonstrate a good start has been made on linking subjects to provide interesting and lively learning opportunities which pupils say they love. The school has plans to develop these further.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The care, guidance and support provided for pupils are outstanding. The school's safeguarding and child protection procedures are impressive and meet the latest government requirements. All pupils are known well. Any signs of distress are quickly noted and the welfare officer deals most efficiently with pupils' and their family's concerns. Academic and personal development guidance is good. Pupils know their personal targets for improvement and enjoy achieving them. The way in which the school works in partnership with others is outstanding. Productive links with outside agencies help support the good provision for pupils with learning difficulties. Very good links with many of the high number of pre-school providers ensure a smooth start to school. Very strong links with the adjacent junior school provide for a smooth transition to the next stage of education.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher, senior team and governors share a successful vision for a school with very high standards in academic and personal achievement. Relationships between the school and parents are very productive and have a significant impact on pupils' good achievement. Parents' and pupils' views are sought regularly and acted upon. School improvement planning is good. The regular programme of lesson observations and looking at pupils' work gives the headteacher and senior team a clear understanding of the standards across the school and what needs to be done to improve further. Currently, the outcomes of this monitoring are not always formally recorded, which makes it difficult to keep a rigorous track of progress towards planned improvements. Governors give the headteacher and staff their full support and take a knowledgeable interest in the work of the school.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

16 March 2007

Dear Children

West Leigh Infant School, Ronald Hill Grove, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2JB

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and being so friendly and helpful. We were extremely impressed with your behaviour in lessons and at playtimes in your crowded playground. We think you work hard in lessons, make good progress and reach exceptionally high standards in your reading, writing and maths.

You go to a good school and everyone looks after you particularly well. When we visited your classrooms and looked at your work, we could see that your lessons are interesting and you enjoy your work, especially in the 'workshops'.

Your headteacher is doing a good job running your school and improving things for you at a good rate. We have asked her to do some things to make it even better. We have asked her if she can make sure you have a break in the first session of the day so that you don't get too tired. We have also asked that when Mrs Gent and teachers check on your lessons and your work, they keep detailed records of what they have seen.

We hope you made a lot of money for Comic Relief!

Thank you all again for your helpfulness.

All good wishes,

Cheryl Thompson Lead Inspector