



Willesborough Junior School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118371
Local Authority Kent
Inspection number 291113
Inspection dates 8–9 January 2007
Reporting inspector Helen Hutchings

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

Type of school	Junior	School address	Highfield Road
School category	Foundation		Willesborough
Age range of pupils	7–11		Ashford TN24 0JU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01233 620405
Number on roll (school)	544	Fax number	01233 638744
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Arshad Haque
		Headteacher	Mike Smith
Date of previous school inspection	17 September 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large junior school. The school is designated to take pupils with physical disabilities and some of these pupils also have complex learning needs. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties is slightly higher than in most schools because a higher-than-average proportion of pupils have statements of special educational need. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is lower than average, although other socio-economic indicators are broadly average. Most children are from White British backgrounds but an increasing number join the school at an early stage of speaking English.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school with some good features, where aspects of the provision of education, integrated care and extended services meet the needs of its pupils well. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. The school has a friendly ethos, successfully encouraging pupils to develop warm relationships which create a positive climate for learning. Their attitudes to learning are good and they appreciate that adults make learning interesting. Pupils show their enjoyment of school in their considerate behaviour and good attendance. Parents and carers are rightly confident in the school's good care, support and guidance and this makes pupils feel secure. Pupils take pride in their 'healthy school' and have an exceptional awareness of how food and exercise contribute to health and fitness. They make sensible choices at lunch and participate in a wide range of sporting activities.

The school is successfully meeting its aim of 'Learning Today for Life Tomorrow'. Pupils achieve standards in line with national averages, which gives them a firm foundation for their future economic well-being. They achieve satisfactorily because of the sound teaching across the school. Marking and regular assessments are particularly effective in helping pupils to understand what they have to do to make their work better. However, in a few lessons, the pace of learning, particularly in the initial parts of the lesson, is too slow for some pupils in the group. The school also recognises that standards could be higher, particularly in writing and mathematics. Both of these issues are already included as key priorities for development. The curriculum meets pupils' needs satisfactorily and some staff are trialling new approaches to developing writing and numeracy by providing opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects.

The school has an accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and has already shown success in addressing weaker areas. For example, both adults and pupils say that behaviour has improved significantly as a result of the systems adopted in recent years. Marking and assessment were identified as areas for development when the school was last inspected and these are now strengths of the school. The school went through a difficult period, with frequent changes in leadership and staffing, and progress and standards declined. However, the present headteacher and deputy headteacher give a very strong lead and the actions taken are ensuring that successful practice is embedded across the school. Leadership and management across the school are satisfactory and improving, and middle managers are currently involved in a programme of management development to improve their skills further. The shared understanding of the school's direction, strong determination to succeed and growing expertise amongst middle management mean that the capacity for further improvement is good.

What the school should do to improve further

- Give pupils more opportunities to use and practise their writing and numeracy skills in other subjects in order to improve achievement and raise standards in English and mathematics.

- Ensure that the pace of lessons challenges all pupils in the group.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Pupils enter the school with attainment in line with national averages and the standards as pupils leave have been broadly average for a number of years. Pupils' satisfactory achievement prepares them satisfactorily for their future education. Following a period of turbulence in management and staffing a few years ago, the school recognised that achievement was variable and successfully introduced a number of initiatives to ensure that pupils make more even progress. Pupils' achievement is now at least satisfactory in each year group. Focused work in writing and mathematics helped to raise standards significantly in the national tests in 2005 and, although not maintained in 2006, the lower attainment of this group when they joined the school means that their achievement was still satisfactory. Different groups of pupils make similar rates of progress and those with the most complex learning needs progress satisfactorily towards the targets set for their development. The overall targets set for pupils' performance are realistic and the school is successful in meeting most of these.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good and have a positive effect on their learning. Pupils show mature and responsible attitudes towards their work and the school. Consistently good behaviour helps pupils to concentrate well in lessons and feel secure around the school. They say that there is no bullying and they know whom to approach if there are any problems. Learning about safety in using physical education and design and technology equipment and events such as the 'anti-bullying week' have given pupils a good understanding of how to stay safe and also strengthen their sense of right and wrong. Year 6 pupils contribute to 'health and safety walks' and remain vigilant when out in the playground by acting as playground 'buddies'. Pupils work well together to contribute positively to the life of the school in a number of ways. For example, older pupils take responsibility for organising equipment for school assemblies and the 'Green team' is making the school environment more attractive. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, although their awareness of other cultures is rather limited. Pupils have a good awareness of those less fortunate than themselves and their involvement in charity fundraising events gives them a sound understanding of wider economic and social issues.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with a number of strengths. Teachers consistently plan with clear learning intentions which are understood by pupils. Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and teachers build on this well by encouraging independent ways of working, for example, in planning and editing their writing. Good use is made of role play to stimulate ideas and several teachers use interactive whiteboards imaginatively to aid learning. Teachers' marking is consistently good. Pupils are given clear indications of how to improve. They understand their targets, which are regularly adjusted when achieved. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties and with physical disabilities. In some lessons, especially where there is a wide range of attainment, the pace in whole-class sessions is a little slow. Consequently, those who are quicker to understand do not make enough progress. Higher-attaining pupils could cope with more challenge on occasions. These have been recognised in the school's training programme as areas for further development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and pupils with differing needs are all successfully helped to participate in a range of activities both inside and outside the classroom. A number of opportunities enrich pupils' learning through clubs, school visits and themed days such as the 'Victorian' and 'Egyptian' days. Gifted and talented pupils are given additional opportunities to develop skills in, for example, mathematics, music or sports through good links with other schools. They participate enthusiastically in a wide range of clubs. The school has adopted a number of strategies which are successfully improving pupils' mathematical and writing skills. Booster groups to provide additional support in Years 5 and 6 are particularly effective. Although there are good examples of numeracy and literacy skills being developed in different subjects, such cross-curricular links require further extension to become fully effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides pupils with good care and guidance and pupils say that they are well cared for and supported to improve their work. Assessment and tracking procedures are good and are used well to set targets and identify any pupils who may be falling behind. Pupils' additional needs and barriers to learning are diagnosed well and they are given effective individual or group support. The school has good internal welfare systems and there are useful links with external agencies to support pupils' individual needs, especially where the needs are more complex. Communication with parents and carers, particularly about pupils' progress, is good, although some parents commented

that they would wish to have more opportunities to share their views. Child protection procedures are secure and known by staff.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have given strong leadership since their appointment after a period of turbulence. Change has been gradual but established on very firm foundations. They have a clear vision for improvement which is shared by a recently strengthened senior management team and by other staff. The systems and processes they have put in place are beginning to result in significantly improved standards and achievement and the school has a good capacity to improve. Governors are both supportive and challenging.

The day-to-day management of the school and its finances is efficient and resources are well managed. The professional development, training and deployment of teaching assistants are particularly effective. Through rigorous monitoring, coaching and professional development there is now a consistent approach to teaching and learning and other aspects of school practice such as managing pupils' behaviour. The roles of middle managers, such as core subject co-ordinators and heads of year, have been well developed and they contribute effectively to planning for change. Other subject co-ordinators are still working towards assuming their full responsibilities.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
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	3
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

Thank you for the help you gave us when we inspected your school. A particular thanks to the groups who came to talk to us. Our discussions with you helped us to find out a lot about the school. I promised you that we would let you know what we found out.

We are pleased that your school does a satisfactory job, and that some things are good.

- You told us that you enjoy school and, watching you in lessons, we saw that you work hard.
- We were pleased that you all get on well together in lessons and in the playground.
- We agree that adults take very good care of you so that you feel safe and secure in school.
- Your teachers mark your work very well and this helps you to understand what to do to improve.
- You are very conscious of healthy options and take part well in sport to keep you fit.
- You are lucky to have a wide range of clubs and we are pleased that so many of you take part in these.

We agree with your teachers that your work could be even better, particularly in writing and numeracy. We have asked them to do some things to help you improve.

- Give you more opportunities to practise your reading and writing skills in other subjects.
- Make sure that everybody has enough new work in lessons so that you do not waste any time doing things which you already know how to do well.