

West Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101024
Local Authority	Wandsworth
Inspection number	307567
Inspection date	4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Barry Jones

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 on roll	
School	207
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Libby Alexander
Headteacher	Ms Julie Dobson
Date of previous school inspection	13 October 2003
School address	5 Merton Road London SW18 5ST
Telephone number	020 8874 5900
Fax number	020 8874 5991

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

- whether any particular groups of potentially vulnerable children underachieve significantly in the early years
- attendance and behaviour
- how well more able pupils progress in mathematics and writing at Key Stage 1.

Evidence was gathered from performance data, external monitoring, observations of teaching and the work produced by pupils. Parents' questionnaires, pupils, governors, and staff contributed to the judgements. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

West Hill is an average-sized, inner city primary school. The proportions of pupils who are eligible for free school meals and those who have statements of special educational need are above average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is also above average. A majority of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils come from a wide range of cultural backgrounds. The larger groups come from White British, Asian and Black British communities. The main languages spoken, other than English, are Urdu and Somali. There are separate admission arrangements for the Nursery and the Reception classes. The number of pupils joining and leaving at unusual times is higher than in most schools of this size. The school recently achieved Healthy Schools status and was re-awarded Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Hill is a good school. It has successfully fostered a vibrant multi-cultural and multi-racial community. It meets the diverse needs of its pupils well. This is mainly because of the very good lead by the headteacher. She is ably supported by her senior leadership team and other staff. The school has outstanding features. The quality of care, support and guidance is outstanding and, correspondingly, pupils' personal development is excellent. The positive ethos underpins the school's good contribution to community cohesion. The school has initiated and supported family learning groups. For instance, a multi-lingual library has been set up after school for parents and their children to use. Staff, and particularly the learning mentor, work closely and successfully with new families and help them to settle. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school. As one parent said, 'I am totally confident with the staff's commitment to my children's well-being. They love going to school'.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills that are below those expected for their age. They make a good start in the Foundation Stage as a result of the good provision. They continue to receive good teaching and a good curriculum throughout the school. Teachers manage their classes well, make lessons interesting and use questions well to develop pupils' thinking skills. This consistency reflects the effective monitoring and evaluation by senior managers. The gap between pupils' attainment and national averages is closed progressively as they move through the school. In 2007 in the national assessments at the end of Year 2, results were close to average in writing but still below in mathematics. By the end of Year 6, results are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. Given their low starting points, pupils' overall achievement is good.

Many of the pupils start with low language skills. The school allocates a high priority to remedying this but it takes time. This largely explains why few of the pupils reach the higher level at the end of Year 2 in mathematics and writing. By the end of Year 6 the proportions attaining the higher level in English, mathematics and science are broadly average and demonstrates the progress made overall. However, the school is not complacent and is allocating extra resources and increasing monitoring to raise achievement further. There are no underperforming minority ethnic groups but it takes summer-born pupils longer to catch up with their peers in some years. The school acts decisively whenever it detects a dip in performance. For instance, in the Year 6 tests in 2007, some pupils did not make the expected progress in writing. Consequently, the school has strengthened approaches to teaching literacy and given more emphasis to pupils being able to understand and interpret text.

The school is proactive and adopts some innovative curriculum projects. For instance, the school has been recognised by the local authority as a centre of excellence for helping children to deal with their emotions and be able to express their feelings. This work is particularly well targeted at vulnerable children. The school is also developing the creative aspects of the curriculum and Year 1 and 2 pupils spoke enthusiastically about this work. Identifying opportunities for the pupils to investigate and enquire for themselves has been established as the starting point in the teachers' planning. The school is constantly reflecting on its practice and considering new ideas to bring about further improvements. As a result, it has introduced a new approach to reading and pupils are now better able to link sounds with letters.

The high quality of care stems from the individual commitment of the staff. It is complemented by the good partnerships with other agencies. Consequently, pupils enjoy school very much

and say they feel very safe. They respond positively to the good role models set by adults and make an excellent contribution to both the school and the wider community. Members of the school council say that their views are valued. They have been able to contribute to formulating the behaviour policy. This is implemented consistently and pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are courteous and very considerate of others. This is the case even though the school accepts pupils from other schools who have misbehaved in the past. These pupils are integrated well and succeed because of effective and caring support. The school has made strenuous efforts to raise attendance, which has improved since the previous inspection and is now average. The introduction of a breakfast club has helped to improve the attendance of some pupils. The achievements of the gardening club have been recognised locally. Additionally, the school received a distinction in the London Environment Award which acknowledged the initiative taken by its pupils. Pupils have an excellent understanding of healthy-living matters. They develop into mature, well-rounded young people. Consequently, they are prepared well for moving on to secondary schools. They speak with pride about their school.

The school's self-evaluation procedures feed well into the priorities in the school improvement plan. Academic guidance is very good. Effective tracking and monitoring ensure that pupils from all ethnic backgrounds are given support that enables them to make good progress. Consequently, the school meets the challenging targets that it sets. The governing body keeps a watchful eye and acts as a critical friend to the school. Together with its track record, this means that the school has good capacity to improve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Many children enter the Nursery or Reception with English as an additional language and a number of others have significant speech and language difficulties. They are well supported by additional teaching staff and specialist help. This means they make rapid strides with improving their English and so join in more fully with other work. There are on-going, thorough assessments which enable staff to plan well to meet the diverse needs and this contributes significantly to the children's good progress. Most children achieve well by the end of the Foundation Stage. The school affords a high priority to developing language and mathematical skills. Consequently, they start Year 1 with skills that are closer to national averages. A very good Foundation leader coordinates the work of other staff very well. There is a good balance of adult-led activities and opportunities for children to learn through well-planned play. Parents are well informed about their children's development and appreciate the open door policy.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of more able pupils at Key Stage 1, particularly in mathematics.

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Annex A

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?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	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	2

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Hill Primary School, London, SW18 5ST

Thank you very much for your help and cooperation when I inspected your school. You were very polite and courteous and a credit to your school. You told me that you enjoy school very much and feel very safe there. Some of the members of your school council assured me that their views are valued. For instance, they have contributed the plans for the upgrading of the toilets. They have also been consulted over the behaviour policy. They explained the charters for the playground, assemblies and lunchtime. Pupils from Years 1 and 2 were excited about the things they had been able to do in their creative work.

I agree with you and your parents that West Hill is a good school and it has some outstanding features. The things I liked most are that:

- you develop into mature, responsible young people
- you make a good start in the Nursery or Reception classes
- West Hill is a family and you look after one another very well
- you make good progress in your work
- you have good teachers
- you all help newcomers to the school and help them to settle
- the staff work well as a team
- the school is led well by the headteacher.

The school is keen to improve further. It is trying out new methods to help you read and write better and to think very clearly. I have asked it to make sure the younger more able pupils do well, particularly in mathematics.

Thank you again. I wish you continuing success in the future. It was a privilege to visit your school.

Barry Jones

Lead Inspector