

Wickham Common Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101595
Local Authority	Bromley
Inspection number	307749
Inspection date	6 October 2008
Reporting inspector	Juliet Ward

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	398
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	26
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Haggart
Headteacher	Mrs Sheila A Taplin
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Gates Green Road Coney Hall West Wickham BR4 9DG
Telephone number	020 8462 4927
Fax number	020 8462 5148

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

The inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues.

How well the school had improved the range of assessment procedures, the use of information to aid planning and to help pupils understand their individual targets since the last inspection, and the increased effectiveness of the senior and middle managers in the systematic monitoring of teaching and learning.

The inspectors gathered evidence by jointly observing lessons with senior managers, discussions with staff, governors and pupils, by scrutiny of pupils' work, parental questionnaires and the school's records of checks on the quality of its work, and by tracking pupils' progress. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given by its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Wickham Common Primary School is situated on the edge of the London Borough of Bromley. The majority of the children live locally. Early Years Foundation Stage provision comprises the two Reception classes. The proportion of children eligible for free school meals is lower than found nationally, as is the number of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups has risen, but remains lower than the national average. The school has Activemark and Artsmark and is in the process of renewing the Healthy Schools Award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wickham Common Primary is a good school. Within a caring ethos that permeates all aspects of school life, pupils are valued and cherished as individuals. Consequently, they flourish and are keen to do well. The overwhelming majority of parents are supportive of the school. One parental comment is typical of many, 'Wickham Common is a wonderful school and both my children are very happy here and have made very good progress.'

Pupils achieve well because of the good quality of teaching throughout the school. Children get off to a flying start in the Reception class because their individual needs are met well and they make good progress. This progress is built on steadily throughout the rest of the school, with academic skills and creative talents being effectively nurtured. Because of this, by the end of Year 6 pupils attain standards that are above average in English, mathematics and science. Progress in Years 3 to 6 is stronger than at Key Stage 1, especially for those who find learning difficult. Pupils become increasingly adept at using their prior knowledge and understanding to develop their current learning. The higher attaining pupils do not always do as well as they could because the tasks set for them are not always challenging enough. A relative weakness in English is the achievement of pupils in writing in Years 1 and 2. Though standards are slightly above average, they are not as high as in reading. This stems from pupils not having sufficient opportunities to practise and improve their skills in writing in a wide enough range of contexts, for example by expressing their ideas by writing in subjects other than English. The success of the school's on-going work to improve the standard of writing is evident in the pupils' improved attainment in the most recent end-of Key Stage 1 tests. Despite this improvement, writing continues to be an area for further development.

Pupils also reach high standards in other subjects, such as history, music and art. This results from a good curriculum that is generally planned well to maximise pupils' performance, although there are some missed opportunities to extend writing links across the curriculum. The enrichment experiences provided for pupils are excellent and make a very positive contribution to their learning and personal development. There are frequent visitors to school and pupils go on many visits, including a residential stay, to extend their horizons. Year 6 pupils spoke with enthusiasm, for example, about activities planned for a future trip to a local activity centre. The curriculum is planned well to develop pupils' understanding of the beliefs and traditions of the wide range of cultures found in modern day society. There is an extensive range of after school clubs, with very strong emphasis on sporting activity to promote pupils' health and fitness. Typical of the many appreciative comments received from parents is, 'The quality of extra-curricular activities is very good and music is highly valued.'

Pupils behave well, being polite and considerate to others. They enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in the good attendance rate. As one parent commented, 'My children flourished after changing to Wickham, particularly my older son who always found learning a challenge'. Pupils willingly take on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council or a house captain, and make a positive contribution to the school community. They also contribute well to the life of the wider community, such as by taking an active role in musical events, linking with a school abroad and raising money for charity projects. Pupils show an outstanding understanding of healthy eating and the need for regular exercise. This is reflected in the very high attendance at sporting clubs. They talk confidently and with full understanding about how to stay safe and they act responsibly in and around the school. The high level of skills in literacy and numeracy pupils demonstrate, show they are well prepared for their future lives.

However, pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) are patchy and this is in part due to the lack of up-to-date ICT facilities available to the school prior to 2007.

Teachers increasingly involve pupils in assessing their own progress; this has been an ongoing thread of improvement since the last inspection, but much more of a focus during the past academic year. The good detail in lesson plans includes time for pupils to reflect and discuss how well they have done and what they could do next to improve. Teaching assistants support pupils effectively, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Pupils collaborate very well in pairs and small groups, showing positive attitudes to their learning. There are thorough procedures for checking the progress that pupils make. However, the information gained is not always used well enough in Years 1 and 2 to plan activities designed to improve pupils' writing skills, or to ensure sufficient challenge is provided for the more able pupils.

Parents greatly appreciate the way the school looks after and cares for their children. One comment summed up the views of many, 'the school has a real family feel.' Safeguarding procedures are in place, including risk assessments within and around school and also for off-site visits. There are very good links with outside agencies to provide extra support for individual pupils when needed.

The recently appointed headteacher provides strong leadership with a clear drive for school improvement. Her vision is shared by the senior leadership team and all involved in the work of the school. This is evident in the strong team ethos shown throughout the school. This has played an important part in ensuring the maintenance of high standards, including during the period of transition. There have been many more opportunities for all managers to lead in their areas of responsibility over the past academic year. The school's self-evaluation is accurate and enabled it to identify the correct areas for priority development. This is seen in the way it has targeted improvement in writing in Years 1 and 2 and mathematics in Key Stage 2. The governors play an active role in supporting school improvement, which has been good since the last inspection. Governors have strengthened their skills such as acting as critical friends in recent months and now have a secure understanding of the questions to ask. Given the school's track record, the capacity for further improvement is good.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make at least good progress. This is because the procedures for introducing children into Reception are very good and this helps them quickly settle into everyday school routines. One parent wrote, 'The efforts made by the school for preparing my daughter for Reception were excellent.' Staff tailor activities very successfully to meet individual needs. These activities are practical, stimulating and effectively capture the children's interest. Children are encouraged to make choices for themselves, which helps them develop as independent learners; this is a real strength of the provision. Children enter the school at levels broadly expected for their ages, they achieve well and by the time they enter Year 1 are meeting or exceeding the levels expected of them in all areas of learning. The school is currently reviewing the development of the assessment systems in the Foundation Stage to sharpen up the staff's observation of key learning made by children. Children enjoy their time in Reception, playing and working happily on their own or with others.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide a wider range of opportunities for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to practise and improve their skills in writing.

- Ensure there is greater challenge in the tasks set for the higher attaining pupils.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of 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?	2

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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

20 October 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wickham Common Primary School, West Wickham, BR4 9DG

On behalf of your inspectors I would like to thank you for making us so welcome when we came to your school. We really enjoyed visiting all of your classes, looking at your work and talking with you. We are sad not to have been able to spend much more time in each class. We are especially pleased some of you came to talk to us about your work, and showed us lots of it.

Your school is a good school with lots of special features. All of the adults working with you care very much about you and want you to do well. Your headteacher leads and manages your school very well indeed. You make good progress during your time at Wickham Common and some of you are ready to manage even harder work. Your teachers make lessons interesting. Your behaviour is good and you listen well in lessons and try hard. Your parents said how much they like the school and lots of them and lots of you told us how well you get on together and how helpful the teachers are. It was good to see how kind you are and how willingly you help each other.

We have asked the teachers to make the work even harder for those of you who sometimes find it too easy. We have also asked the teachers in Years 1 and 2 to make sure you have lots of chances to write so that your writing improves.

Please thank your parents for kindly sending in the letters and responses to the questionnaire. These helped us to understand how well the school is doing.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Ward

Lead Inspector