

West Thornton Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101741
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	307791
Inspection date	1 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Sheena MacDonald HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	607
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Sylvia Trottman
Headteacher	Mr Stuart Roberts
Date of previous school inspection	7 July 2003
School address	Rosecourt Road Croydon CR0 3BS
Telephone number	020 8684 3497
Fax number	020 8665 9609

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated pupil progress across all key stages, the extent to which pupils are able to use initiative, work collaboratively and take responsibility, the quality of academic guidance and the clarity of direction provided by school leaders. 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 Thornton is a large primary school serving a culturally and socially diverse area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free schools meals is higher than the national average. About a quarter of the pupils come from a White British heritage and the other three quarters represent many different heritages but mainly Indian, Sri Lankan and Black Caribbean. Almost half of the pupils speak English as an additional language and 66 are at the early stages of learning English; half of this group are in the Foundation Stage. Higher than average numbers of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has recently achieved a number of awards: Healthy Schools, The Literacy Trust Reading School of the year, Artsmark Gold, Basic Skills Quality Mark and Eco Silver.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

West Thornton Primary is a good and improving school with a number of outstanding features. Pupils are proud of their school and of their achievements, both socially and academically and there is a palpable sense of celebration and joy throughout the school. Partnerships with parents and the community are excellent. One parent commented that the school 'is very active in involving parents, which makes us feel we all play important roles in our children's education.' In a school with such a wide cultural mix, the extent of mutual respect, harmony and celebration of diversity is impressive.

Pupils achieve well across the school. Many children arrive with low starting points, particularly in the key area of language and communication. By the time pupils leave the school they reach standards which are above national averages. This represents good progress. Progress in the Foundation Stage has improved in recent years and this year most pupils were attaining within national expectations by the time they arrived in Year 1. By the end of Key Stage 1 standards are broadly average although fewer than average reach the higher levels. The school is keenly aware of this as an area for improvement and has initiated strategies such as ensuring better opportunities for developing speaking and listening and a whole school focus on raising standards in writing. These strategies are beginning to have a positive impact. One initiative, which deserves a special mention, is the establishment of the Reading Champions, a group of older boys who provide good role models and have contributed to raising standards particularly for boys. The rate of progress speeds up as pupils gain more self-confidence and fluency in English and increasingly respond to the deeply embedded expectation that everyone should aim as high as possible. The school regularly checks pupils' attainment and progress and provides effective 'catch up' activities and additional support for pupils who are not reaching their challenging targets or those who have additional learning difficulties.

Pupils' personal development and wellbeing are good with several important strengths. Pupils' welfare is at the heart of the school and pastoral care is excellent. Pupils feel safe and very well cared for. There are very good systems for managing behaviour and these are consistently applied across the school. This combined with the stress placed on valuing everybody, good teamwork and making learning interesting results in excellent behaviour. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding and the overwhelming majority of parents agree that this is the case. Pupils relish many opportunities to take responsibility and are proud of their contribution to the direction of the school through the various councils and buddy systems. There are good and increasing opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and develop enterprise skills.

An important factor in the school's success is good teaching. Pupils told the inspector that, 'teachers make learning fun'. Lessons are well structured, interesting and lively with good opportunities for pupils to take an active part in their learning. Activities are carefully planned to meet the needs of all pupils including challenging the more able to extend their learning. The school is currently improving the quality of marking and feedback to pupils and this is developing into a strong feature. Learning intentions are clear and pupils understand what they need to do to succeed in each lesson and to improve their work. Middle managers provide effective role models and good team working ensures that all teachers, including those who are inexperienced, are well supported.

Staff work hard to make the school a vibrant, exciting environment. The curriculum is good and the school makes the most of themed weeks and events, visitors and visits, links with

parents and the local community to bring learning to life. Pupils and parents appreciate the good range of clubs and other activities which further enrich school life. Pupils' personal and emotional needs including aspects such as health and citizenship, are very well addressed through the curriculum resulting in good outcomes in these areas. The school is making further improvements to the curriculum which make even better links between subjects, focus on making learning interesting and relevant and provide more opportunities for pupils to develop learning skills such as enquiry and problem solving. The revised curriculum has only been in place this term so it is too early to judge its effectiveness but already is resulting in increased motivation and excitement in pupils and adults alike.

The driving force behind the school's success is the headteacher who provides inspirational leadership and has a very clear vision of what primary school education should be. He has gathered around him a talented leadership group which demonstrates excellent teamwork and shared commitment to improvement. Good leadership underpinned by well-organised management systems has resulted in a harmonious environment where everyone feels valued and where pupils thrive personally and academically. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and improvement planning has a good focus on raising standards. The enthusiasm and commitment of the leadership team and all staff has resulted in a great deal of action taking place and strategies implemented to achieve improvement. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the impact of these different actions and strategies are less well developed.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the reception classes get a good start to their education. They make good progress overall and excellent progress in language development. This is an improvement on previous years and is because of well-focused action taken by staff to address the weaknesses in key skills. The school is beginning to look more carefully at children's progress across the reception stage and into Key Stage 1. There is more to be done to sharpen this focus and find out what strategies are making the most positive difference.

Teaching and learning are good. The classrooms are bright and interesting and provide a good learning environment which promotes learning. There is a good balance of adult led and independent learning activities both inside and outside the classroom. The classrooms are a hive of activity and sometimes staff miss opportunities to extend children's language and thinking. In this first term there is a strong focus on personal, social and emotional development; this is particularly important as many of the children had their birthdays in the summer and are just four years old. This success of this focus allied to outstanding induction arrangements and strong parent partnerships is seen in the calm, happy and settled atmosphere throughout reception. The Foundation Stage leader provides good leadership, clear direction and is a strong role model for her team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve systems for checking that the school's strategies for improving teaching and learning and raising achievement are effective.

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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?	1
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	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	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	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?	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.

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	1
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

8 November 2007

Dear Students

Inspection of West Thornton Primary School, Croydon, CR0 3BS

Thank you for being so friendly, polite and welcoming when I visited your school recently. I really enjoyed my time with you especially meeting some of the school council and spending some time in lessons and in the playground. I agree with you and your parents that West Thornton is a good school and in some areas it is excellent.

One of the first things I noticed was that everyone seems to enjoy being in school. You told me one of the reasons for this is that your teachers try very hard to make lessons interesting and fun. I certainly enjoyed the ones I visited. You also told me how much you enjoy the different playground activities and I noticed how well you get on together inside and outside. You show each other respect and behaviour in your school is excellent. That does not mean you are angels all the time! When things occasionally go wrong you are good at sensibly trying to sort things out and the adults have good, fair systems for dealing with problems.

You get off to a good start in Reception and you carry on making good progress through the school, so that by the time you leave Year 6 you reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. You are working hard with your teachers to improve your reading and writing and from what we saw, it looks like this is working. The Reading Champions do a great job. Well done!

Your headteacher and the other leaders make an excellent team and they are making a big difference to your school. They do a great job of involving all sorts of people, including your parents, and getting them working together to make sure you get a really good education.

Even though your school is good, your headteacher and the other school leaders are determined to make it even better. I have asked them to stand back and have a really close look at all the different activities that are going on and measure whether they are making a difference to your achievement. Then they can work out which things are working really well and making the most difference.

Thank you again for helping to make our time in your school so enjoyable.

Yours sincerely,

Sheena MacDonald HMI