

Wessington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	112646
Local Authority	DERBYSHIRE LA
Inspection number	310963
Inspection date	27 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Robert Drew

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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Cath Pilsbury
Headteacher	Mrs Victoria Cousins
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	The Green Wessington Derbyshire DE55 6DQ
Telephone number	01773832748
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector, who was in school for one day. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following aspects: current trends in standards and achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and the overall effectiveness of the Foundation Stage. The impact of leadership, including that of the governing body, was also inspected. Evidence was gathered from observations of lessons and pupils' work, parents' questionnaires and from interviews with staff, pupils and governors. Extensive school documentation, including its self-evaluation, were examined. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail but no reason was found to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in self-evaluation, were not justified and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average school serving Wessington village and its surrounding rural area. The overwhelming majority of pupils are White British with a very small number from minority ethnic backgrounds. No pupils speak English as an additional language. Attainment on entry varies very widely, but on balance standard are a little below average. More pupils than usual have moderate learning difficulties. However, few are significantly disadvantaged economically. The school holds many awards including, the Basic Skills Quality Mark and National Healthy Schools Status.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school, serving its pupils well. There are some aspects, such as pupils' behaviour and the school's links with others, which are outstanding.

Pupils make good progress in lessons and they achieve well between entering and leaving the school. Particularly impressive are the significantly above average standards reached by Year 6 pupils in English, mathematics and science. Test results at the end of Year 6 show an upward trend over the last few years. With such small year groups, standards are heavily influenced by the performance of individual pupils, so it is to the school's credit that it caters well for the full range of their abilities and needs. Overall, pupils make good progress to reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards on entry to the Foundation Stage are a little below average, especially in some language and numeracy skills. Past results in Year 2 tests suggest that these weaknesses have tended to persist, but current pupils are working at considerably higher standards than before. In particular, Year 2 pupils are making very good progress. Good teaching is helping them master core skills such as speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematics, improving their capacity for concentration and independent work. As a result, children are now leaving Reception having exceeded national expectations and their work in Year 2 is above average in reading writing and mathematics. The performance of those pupils capable of reaching the higher levels has improved. This has halted a downward trend but has not yet established a rising one. Year 1 and Year 3 pupils, who are taught in the same class because of the small size of this school, are not making quite as much progress as those in Year 2, and a challenge for the school is to ensure that progress is consistently good across the years. Similarly, the recently introduced arrangements for tracking pupils' progress in Years 2 to 6 have not been in place long enough to ensure that pupils achieve consistently well throughout Key Stage 2. The school is aware of the need to consolidate improvements in both these areas.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is outstanding. They enjoy school and show a clear awareness of how to ensure personal safety and healthy lifestyles. They are self-confident and caring towards others. They contribute well to the school and the community beyond it and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding. The politeness and consideration shown to each other and to staff and visitors is excellent. Older pupils are particularly mature in the way they support and encourage the younger ones both in the classroom and at play times. Attendance levels are above average.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a daily, positive, impact on both academic progress and pupils' personal development. They adopt an encouraging approach while placing high expectations on pupils. Lessons are planned well. Teachers are also consistently good at providing work for the great range of ability and maturity of pupils in their mixed-age classes. Teachers make it clear what skills or knowledge need to be learnt and they build in time to consolidate this during and at the end of lessons. One of the key successes of leadership and management has been to establish consistent practice amongst staff. No lessons show teachers are content with satisfactory performance. They show a good awareness of pupils' prior knowledge and targets, generally sustain pace well and use strategies that actively involve pupils. While there is evidence of some outstanding practice, there is scope for it to be more prominent with pace and active participation of the very highest order.

The school is justified in rating its curriculum and its care, guidance and support of pupils as good. Both areas make a good impact on the progress and the personal development of pupils. This is because staff know their pupils very well and tailor the work they set and the guidance they offer to suit the individual needs of pupils.

Leadership and management are good overall, with the headteacher providing an excellent sense of purpose and direction. The capacity to improve is good, having been demonstrated in improved teaching and rising standards at all phases of the school as well as by the strong sense of team work which underpins the work of the staff. Improvement stems from effective self-evaluation and rigorous monitoring. Governors are very well informed about the school and perform their 'critical friend' role effectively. The school has made such a wide range of valuable contacts with the wider community that these links are now outstanding. They are seen in fund raising for a charity in Tanzania, work on the local nature reserve, contribution to local ceremonies and in the hosting of monthly lunches for the elderly. Pupils task a high level of initiative in all these activities, which helps their personal development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Leadership in this phase is clear and effective. This ensures good teaching and is helping children progress well. Children are warmly welcomed and their ability is assessed accurately when they start school. They are successfully encouraged to be confident in choosing activities for themselves and in working independently. They acquire increasingly good study skills through formal teaching. Due to consistently good teaching in Nursery and Reception children leave the Foundation Stage with standards in most areas that are above those nationally expected for their age. This is especially true for their attitudes, emotional development, communication skills, knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical development although there remain some relative weaknesses in writing skills. This confirms that children make good overall progress. Teaching is particularly effective at encouraging children's attention through imaginative activities such as 'what's in the treasure chest today?', through fluent explanation and matching tasks closely to children's abilities.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 3 enjoy the very good progress made by pupils in Year 2.
- Embed the effective use of new tracking systems to promote consistent achievement by pupils throughout Years 2 and 6.

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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?	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?	1
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	2
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	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

28 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wessington Primary School, Derbyshire, DE55 6DQ

Thank you for the very warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school recently. A special thanks goes to the school council who gave up part of lunch time to come and talk to me.

You and your parents are right to believe you are in a good school. There are already many good things about your school and many other areas that are improving well.

- Standards are at least above average.
- You are making good progress between starting and leaving school.
- Teaching is good.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well.
- Your own behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.

If the school is to become even more successful, it needs to do the following.

- Recent improvements in Year 2 work, especially in mathematics and writing, extend to the work of all year groups in Key Stage 1.
- The progress you make between Year 2 and 6 improves to match the progress made in other parts of the school.

Best wishes for the rest of your time at Wessington Primary,

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew

Lead inspector