

Wickford Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114813
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311715
Inspection dates	18–19 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Roderick Passant

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	356
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Fiona Kemzura
Headteacher	Mr Terry Flitman
Date of previous school inspection	25 April 2005
School address	Market Road Wickford Essex SS12 0AG
Telephone number	01268 733071
Fax number	01268 570214

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wickford Junior School is larger than average. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils for whom English is not a first language is low. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average, although the percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational need is below average. There is a small number of pupils from Traveller communities. Attainment on entry is broadly average.

The school has attained ActiveMark for its commitment to sports as well as National Healthy Schools Status and the Intermediate International Award for its promotion of healthy lifestyles. It has also gained national recognition for its work in Basic Skills and its work in the arts through ArtsMark Gold. The school also has the Investor in People award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school. It provides excellent value for money. This judgement of outstanding is echoed by the many parents who praised the school using terms such as 'fantastic', 'fabulous' and 'excellent' to describe it. The reason for this success is the excellence of the school's leadership and management who have put in place over time a 'jigsaw' of systems and procedures, combined with astute financial investments, which have now resulted in a very coherent framework of support for the benefit of the pupils. It has also brought about significant improvement since the last inspection. There is a strong sense of teamwork, shared values and common purpose amongst the staff. Governance is good. Refinement and improvement is part of the school's ethos. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. He has a clear vision for the school and is committed to the pupils and their parents. He is skilful in helping staff to grow in their leadership roles so that there is excellent capability and capacity to improve further. The school knows itself very well and makes excellent use of targets to move staff and pupils forward. The school has excellent links with other agencies and local school networks. It actively seeks to build the partnership with parents.

All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress academically and achieve well. Overall standards are above average by the time pupils leave school. The challenge for the school is to raise standards even further and ensure that standards in other subjects, particularly mathematics, reach that of English in which half the pupils gained the highest level (Level 5) in the national tests in 2007. Standards and progress have shown a year-on-year improvement over the last three years because of the effective steps taken by the leadership. Key elements which account for this improvement are: the improved and good quality of teaching; the very strong mutual respect between adults and pupils which stem from the excellent relationships; the excellent assessment and tracking systems which provide early identification of pupils who are not making the progress that they should or whose progress could be accelerated; and the fact the pupils are provided with an exceptionally rich curriculum. This provides pupils with wide-ranging opportunities to succeed, builds their academic confidence and sense of self-esteem and fosters their enjoyment of learning exceptionally well. These factors, coupled with excellent systems for care and guidance, also account for the excellence of their personal development.

Pupils feel particularly safe in school and enjoy it a very great deal. Behaviour is good. It improves as pupils move through the school so that by Year 6 pupils are extremely mature and responsible. This is evident in their exceptional attitudes towards looking after themselves, in adopting healthy lifestyles and the outstanding level of respect and care they show towards each other. Consideration for others, empathy, respect for other people and their cultures, and the recognition of the ethnic diversity are themes explicitly explored with the pupils and accounts for the school's outstanding cohesiveness as a community. Pupils make an excellent contribution to this community through their various roles; through the school council, they have a strong voice in the school. The excellent foundation for their future economic well-being is evident in their independence, mature attitudes and advanced social and academic skills. They leave the school as mature and confident young people.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards even further, ensuring that standards in mathematics match those of English and science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Attainment on entry shows minor variation year-on-year changes but in the main pupils start at the school with average standards of attainment. Pupils make good progress and attain standards in English, mathematics and science which are above average, as reflected by 2007 National Curriculum test results. Standards are particularly high in English because of the emphasis placed by the school on improving pupils' writing skills. In the 2007 national tests, half the pupils gained Level 5 in English and science - which is well above the national average - whereas about a third of pupils, roughly the national average, did so in mathematics. Standards in mathematics - above the national average - have improved but lag behind the improvement in English. The school challenges higher-attaining pupils appropriately. School data show that all pupils, including those from Traveller communities, make good progress and achieve well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against their targets. One parent described the child as making great progress academically and socially because of the real strengths in their provision, whilst another parent described their child as 'thriving' because of the 'support from all staff. Because the school has excellent assessment information it tracks and evaluates the progress of all pupils carefully and makes early interventions to boost an individual pupil's progress or provide additional challenge to accelerate learning.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in their personal development. The school works hard to develop pupils' enjoyment of school along with their sense of self-worth, confidence and respect for themselves and others. They very much enjoy school and the rich range of opportunities it provides. As a result, attendance and behaviour are both good and pupils develop excellent attitudes to learning. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The oldest pupils display considerable maturity, very positive attitudes to learning and take their responsibilities within the school community very seriously. Bullying and racist incidents are, according to the pupils, extremely rare and taken very seriously by the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good. Classroom visits show clearly how much teachers provide interesting and well-planned learning experiences and how much they enjoy their work. The school deploys skilled learning support assistants (LSAs) very effectively. They play a vital part in the smooth running of classrooms and the good support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers manage pupils very well through their excellent relationships. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and provides detailed feedback, letting them know how well they are doing and congratulating them if they are meeting their target for the lesson. Good use is made of the assessment data provided about their pupils to ensure that pupils learn well and make good progress. Pupils are encouraged to be partners in their learning by evaluating their own progress in understanding and against their targets.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding and complemented by an impressive range of clubs. It meets pupils' needs very well because it offers a much wider range of interesting and exciting activities than is usually found. The school achieves this in part by linking subjects and providing specialist teaching, for example for Spanish. Through the provision of schemes such as 'Smart Thinking' and philosophy lessons, there is excellent provision to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The wide range of visits, visitors and sporting activities supports pupils' understanding and opportunities to apply their knowledge to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is excellent enabling these pupils to make good progress. Individual education plans are of high quality and build well on what has been planned previously. Targets are clear and measurable and are analysed well to check on progress. There is good training for staff and support by LSAs. Academic guidance is excellent. The school evaluates particularly well the information from detailed, regular and thorough assessment, recording and tracking procedures. Vulnerable pupils are very well supported and there are extremely good links with specialist agencies. The quality of care is of the highest, with secure and robust systems in place for child protection and the health and safety of pupils. Pupils flourish in the school because they feel valued. The school's House system operates alongside the year groups and creates a strong structure of care and support. The systems are carefully managed, which minimises the possibility that a pupil will not receive appropriate care and attention.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. He provides clarity of vision and ensures pupils get the best deal. His care for the pupils filters down through the school and is part of the school's shared values. This care also extends towards the staff and helps to create the good balance that exists between professional accountability and support. The school makes excellent use of performance management and other targets so that members of staff are accountable for the progress that pupils make and appropriate staff support is given through training and sharing of expertise. One member of staff remarked on the professional openness, which exists in the school, where staff give 'honest opinions which helps you to move forward.' The result is that the school reflects on and evaluates what it is doing and how it can improve. Leadership across the school is excellent. The impact of the school's leadership can be clearly seen in the improvement since the last inspection. In particular, there has been ongoing improvement in standards and the progress that pupils are making. Although improvement in mathematics has until now been more stubborn, the school's leadership has clearly identified what the next steps are. A majority of parents find the headteacher and the staff very approachable and effective, and they appreciate that he and the staff care about their children. Governors are supportive of the school and now have the confidence to question and challenge when appropriate. Careful, strategic financial planning has resulted in an attractive, secure,

well-resourced school and the extremely effective deployment of staff. 'Dynamic, innovative, caring and responsive' were the words used by a parent to describe her first impressions of the school. They also aptly describe the school's leadership and management.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	1

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?	1
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?	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
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	1
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

20 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wickford Junior School, Wickford, Essex, SS12 0AG

Thank you for making us so welcome in your school. We enjoyed our visit very much. My particular thanks to those pupils who gave up part of their lunchtime to talk to us. We found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you our findings.

We think that this is an outstanding school. You told us that you enjoy school and we can see why, particularly when we saw what an extremely interesting range of lessons you have and the rich range of clubs, trips, visitors and other opportunities the school provides. The Isle of Wight trip sounds really exciting. You told us that you get on well with the teachers and it was very reassuring to know that you all felt that there was an adult you could turn to if you had a problem. We think teaching is good in the school. Teachers evidently enjoy teaching you, and you told us that marking was helpful and that they made positive comments to encourage you. It was evident from our stay that all adults care about you a very great deal and work very hard on your behalf. Standards of work by the end of Year 6 are above average. You are doing particularly well in English. You make good progress because teachers keep a close eye on how you are doing. We have suggested that the school could make standards even higher so that the standards in mathematics match those in English and science. Your headteacher provides excellent leadership but we thought that other members of staff who take responsibility for subjects or aspects of the school provide excellent leadership too.

This is an outstanding school not only because of what the adults bring to it but also because of all your contributions. Your attitudes to learning, the fact that you enjoy school so much and the way you develop during your time in school are extremely impressive. It is clearly a very friendly school and you all get on extremely well with one another. By the time you reach Year 6 your maturity, attitudes to other people and sense of responsibility are excellent. You leave school as confident young people.

Sincere good wishes to you all in your future school careers.

Yours sincerely

Roderick Passant

Lead inspector