

West Thurrock Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114906
Local Authority	THURROCK LA
Inspection number	311751
Inspection dates	20–21 November 2007
Reporting inspector	George Falconer 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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	224
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Iain Bendrey
Headteacher	Mr Roger White and Mr Graham Morris
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	The Rookery London Road Grays Essex RM20 3HX
Telephone number	01708866743
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

West Thurrock Primary School is broadly average in size. It is situated in an area of relative social and economic disadvantage. The proportion of children identified as being eligible for free school meals is lower than the national average. There is a higher number of pupils from minority ethnic groups than found nationally. The percentage of pupils for whom English is not their first language is approximately double the national average and some are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or difficulties is above the national average. The vast majority of pupils live within the local area, whilst a small proportion lives further away. The number of pupils leaving and joining the school at times other than the normal admission and transfer times far exceeds the national picture. This growing school is due to move into a new building in the near future. The attainment of children on entry to the Foundation Stage is much lower than expected.

Currently there are two interim acting headteachers replacing the full time headteacher, who is currently on statutory leave.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

West Thurrock Primary is a satisfactory school. It has shown significant improvement over the last few years under the strong leadership and management of the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. It is a school with a purpose and realises its potential for the future. All the staff are keen, energetic and work hard to support the needs of all pupils. There is a good, shared understanding of the strengths and the areas for further development. There is a clear commitment to raising standards and developing the skills of those with leadership roles, including curriculum leaders. However, at present, their monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of their areas is underdeveloped.

During the Foundation Stage, children make very good progress and are very well prepared for their next stage of learning. At Key Stage 1, the majority make good progress and attainment is close to the national average. There has been a positive, upward three-year trend. Standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science have been rising slowly but are generally below average. Nevertheless, in relation to pupils' abilities and starting points this represents sound progress. In addition, it shows that the legacy of underachievement built up over a number of years is being reversed. However, at present, achievement is only satisfactory. The school rightly recognises the need to improve language and literacy skills more effectively to enable pupils to attain higher standards across all subjects.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good with some very good features. The quality of care, guidance and support is good in all respects. Data analysis of pupil progress is particularly strong and teachers have a good understanding of pupils' next steps. Attendance figures have improved but the attendance rate is still below the national average. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with some outstanding features and is now much more consistent across the school. The improvements in recent years is one of the chief factors affecting the better rates of progress made by pupils and better levels of attainment at Key Stage 1. The curriculum is well balanced and geared to suit the needs of learners. There is a very good range and level of extra-curricular enrichment activities aimed at promoting pupils individual interests.

Governance is sound. The governing body is increasingly strengthening its knowledge and skill base. Governors realise that, as a group, there is more work to do in order to gain first hand knowledge about the school's work and effectiveness to be able to hold the school to account and particularly in relation to its standards.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

The Foundation Stage is extremely effective in enabling children to learn because it is very well led and managed by an experienced teacher. She has considerable understanding of the particular needs of the children. As a result, the curriculum is planned effectively to cover all areas of learning, with opportunities to develop imaginative and structured play, including outdoor play. Initially work is rightly focused on social, emotional, communication, language, literacy and mathematical development. The children enjoy their time in the Foundation Stage and by the time they enter Key Stage 1, they are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning. The majority of children reach their targets within their early learning goals and make very good progress. A good deal of emphasis is placed on the home/school partnership. The

Foundation Stage leader is pro-active in making important links with parents but nevertheless is not complacent and is aware that more work remains to be done in this area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus on developing pupils' language skills so that they are able to reach their full potential and attain higher standards in all subjects.
- Improve the monitoring and evaluation skills of governors and middle managers so that the school can judge its own performance more accurately and continue the momentum of improvement.
- Improve pupils' attendance.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The Foundation Stage leader does an excellent job in nurturing the children and in giving them a great start to their education. The children leave the Foundation Stage having made very good progress. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils have continued to make good progress particularly in reading and writing. Good quality teaching is the key factor. Pupils' attainment is broadly average. Standards in reading and writing are generally in line with the national picture but they are slightly below average in mathematics.

At Key Stage 2, standards are below average in English, mathematics and science. Standards in English are lower than mathematics and science. During the course of the inspection, progress in lessons in Key Stage 2 was good overall because of the good quality teaching. This is enabling pupils to make up for some of the ground lost in recent years. The high level of mobility of pupils and the resulting disruption to their education has a considerable impact on the attainment figures at the end of the key stage, as depicted in the 2007 test results. There is no significant difference between the attainment of girls and boys or those of different ability and backgrounds.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. There is strong evidence of pupils being reflective and having a strong sense of fair play. There is also a strong ethos of aspiration embedded in the culture of the school. Pupils are often encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. They show great enjoyment for lessons, applying themselves to tasks and cooperating well with each other. Through physical education, games and sports activities outside of lessons, pupils are developing a clear understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Pupils feel safe and well supported by staff. Behaviour is good overall, and incidents of bullying are rare and effectively dealt with. The 'buddy system' works well. The staff have been proactive in successfully increasing pupil attendance. However, it is still below the national average and remains an area for improvement to the school in terms of raising attainment. Pupils make a satisfactory contribution to their community and sing in the local shopping complex, raising money for charities such as The Great Ormond Street Hospital and by making a good contribution to the church choir. Their positive attitudes to learning and

good progress made in acquiring basic skills demonstrate that pupils are prepared adequately for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Classrooms are stimulating and promote a good learning ethos. The quality of the teaching is good overall with some outstanding provision. Pupils and adults relate well to each other, enabling pupils to take an active part in lessons and resulting in good progress for the majority. In many lessons there is a good level of challenge and teachers plan activities well to meet pupils' differing needs. Pupils with language related difficulties, or where English is not their first language, are well supported overall, but consideration is not always given to their individual learning styles and how pupils will access the curriculum. Personal targets are set in all core subjects, to help pupils understand what their next steps are. Marking that addresses those targets in terms of what pupils do well, and what they need to do to improve, is not always applied consistently throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets requirements. The National Curriculum is enriched with a number of additional activities that provide the pupils with a wide range of interests, including learning to speak Spanish. Personal, social and emotional provision effectively promotes pupils' development and self-esteem. A big emphasis is placed on pupils being happy and healthy. The school provides a successful breakfast club and a good range of lunchtime clubs including music, singing and sports. There is also good provision for pupils to attend booster classes to improve knowledge and understanding in basic literacy skills. The school is a member of The Lakeside Schools Cluster and has links to other institutions enabling it to draw upon a range of appropriate resources in support of raising pupils' attainment levels. The curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of pupils in school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The quality of care, guidance and support is good. All staff, including the administrative staff, are committed to the care of individual pupils and this contributes well to pupils' personal development and well-being. Teaching assistants contribute well to the level of care and support. Pupils' performance is tracked at regular intervals. Staff compensate for the high mobility of pupils through robust and systematic assessment procedures from when pupils enter and as they move through the school. Marking is satisfactory but there are some inconsistencies in the quality of comments which help pupils to understand what they have done well and what they need to do to improve. The school's policies and procedures for risk assessment and child protection are securely in place. It uses outside agencies effectively, when required. The school is rightly seeking additional resources locally and more widely, for pupils in the early stages of acquiring English as an additional language.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are strong features, including the leadership and management of the substantive headteacher. This has already led to big improvements in the quality of overall provision and achievement in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The two temporary interim headteachers have been in post for several weeks and are giving sound support to the school's day-to-day management. They are working closely with the deputy headteacher who in turn is working strategically with the senior management team and other staff. The curriculum leaders work hard to develop aspects of the subject for which they are responsible. As yet, some do not have a great deal of teaching experience to draw upon but do attend courses when necessary to improve their effectiveness. However, overall, curriculum leaders are not sufficiently involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the areas for which they are responsible.

The governing body makes a satisfactory contribution to the work of the school. It has gone some way towards this through its various committees. The monitoring of teaching and learning by governors is not sufficiently robust and the reporting back from observations is not consistently systematic or analytical to be able to contribute fully to raising the levels of attainment. Governors are aware of their current limitations. Consequently, they attend courses to improve their own practice and gains are beginning to have a positive impact on their ability to fulfil their roles and responsibilities.

The school gives satisfactory value for money and, overall, has a good capacity to improve.

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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?	3
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	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
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	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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

22 November 2007

Dear Children

Inspection of West Thurrock Primary School, Grays, RM20 3HX

Thank you very much for being so helpful and for making our work in your school so pleasant. Your school is so welcoming and friendly and you are able to learn in exciting classrooms where the teachers and other adults help you so much with your learning.

We can see that you are progressing well in your lessons and that you really do seem to enjoy them all. Those children that spoke to us commented on how helpful the teachers are. The school provides you with lots of interesting things to do in lessons and in all the clubs that you can choose to join. There is certainly a big push on staying healthy and being safe and you are well cared for by everyone including the staff working in the office. We are impressed by the amount of sporting clubs on offer, and could see that the teachers at West Thurrock Primary School are very keen, energetic and helpful.

Most of you are working hard and doing your best. The staff are going to help you even more so that by the time you leave school, you will be well prepared for secondary school. Your headteachers and teaching staff are going to check the school's work thoroughly and make sure that your progress is even better than it is now; this is so that you will know more and be able to understand more. They are going to think of additional ways of improving your understanding in speaking and listening and reading and writing and this will help you to work in all the subjects. Teachers are going to think even more deeply about how they teach but don't let's forget they are already doing a good job.

Finally, the governors, who are some of the people who help your headteachers and teachers, are going to work in different ways to support the school so that the school can do an even better job in future. So what is it that you can do to help? You already help a lot in many ways in school by helping each other. Some of you have serious jobs to do like being head pupil, helping with jobs around the school and helping with the buddy system. One of the biggest ways you can help is by all of you getting to school everyday so that you don't miss any learning. I know you can do it.

Best wishes for the future.

George Falconer

HMI