

West Horndon Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114921
Local Authority	ESSEX LA
Inspection number	311759
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Manuel

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	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Ivy Bourne
Headteacher	Mr Matt O'Grady
Date of previous school inspection	30 June 2003
School address	Thorndon Avenue West Horndon Brentwood Essex CM13 3TR
Telephone number	01277811741
Fax number	01277811741

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

West Horndon Primary School is much smaller than average. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and a very small percentage come from ethnic minority groups. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds vary and are broadly average. There is a lower than average proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average and the proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is well above average. The school has two speech and language classes, 'Enhanced Provision', set up by the local authority to provide support for pupils who need help with these specific skills. Pupils attending these classes come from other schools in a wide area and all have statements of speech and/or language disorders. The school has gained the Active Mark award.

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. It has some outstanding features, in particular, the excellent levels of care and support provided for all pupils, including those in the special speech and language classes. As one parent remarked, 'This is a great school at the heart of the community.' Pupils develop a good range of key skills in literacy, numeracy and science. Teachers and teacher's assistants make strong contributions to the good support provided for pupils who need extra help. The very new headteacher, until very recently the deputy headteacher, has a very clear vision for improving the school further. The school provides particularly good value for money.

Pupils make good progress during their time in the school. They enter Reception with skills below expected levels and leave at the end of Year 6 with standards above average. Pupils do particularly well in mathematics and science but progress is not as good in writing and standards are not as high in English. Each year group is small and the impact of this is seen in fluctuations in annual test results. There is also relatively high mobility during Years 3 and 4 as pupils in the speech and language classes return to their schools when their skills meet expected levels. The current focus is on raising standards in writing. Some improvements are evident but teachers need to provide further constructive challenges for pupils. A particular strength of the outstanding curriculum is the cross-curricular style of working. Teachers make very clear links between subjects so that learning is more meaningful for pupils. Each Friday, during afternoon sessions, pupils of all ages work together on a wide range of themes and topics.

Teaching is good. Learning objectives are made clear and lessons are made interesting. Excellent relationships and behaviour are evident and pupils enjoy their learning greatly. Assessment procedures are good with termly tracking of pupils' progress taking place. At present, the tracking information is not used regularly enough to set the necessary challenging targets for pupils of all levels of ability.

Leadership and management are good. The new headteacher is working closely with new subject leaders to identify key priorities and make further improvements but roles are not yet fully developed. Good progress has been made in weaker areas identified in the last inspection. Teachers' marking has improved and governors are now more involved in the school's development. There is now a full complement of governors and all have roles in monitoring the school improvement plan. Areas for improvement, as identified in the inspection, came as no surprise and strategies are already in place to make the necessary improvements.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school provides a caring and effective start to children's education with a strong emphasis on developing their all-round skills. This approach enables most children to make good progress in all areas of learning. Good liaison takes place with families. Teaching is good. The teacher and assistant provide a good range of activities which ensure that children enjoy their early learning experiences. Good use is made of resources and children learn how to work and play together well in the indoor and outdoor areas, developing good levels of self-confidence. By the time they enter Year 1, most children achieve all the early learning goals for this age.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that assessment tracking information is used to set regular and consistently challenging targets for all pupils.
- Ensure that standards in writing in all year groups continue to rise.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils' achievement is good and they make good progress during their time in the school. From a wide range of starting points, most of the youngest children achieve the early learning goals by the end of Reception. By the end of Year 2, national test results in reading, writing and mathematics vary year on year because of the small numbers in each class and the variations within each intake. Results in 2007 were just above the national average. The pupils with statements of special educational need achieve well but not all of them reach the average levels. Standards in the current Year 2 are above expected levels in reading and mathematics but lower in writing. Results in tests by the end of Year 6 have been consistently above the national average in the past three years in English, mathematics and science. Results in mathematics and science have been higher than those in English. In the current Year 6 standards are at least at expected levels for this time of year and projections show that levels by the end of the year should again be above average.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Within the school's very caring and supportive environment, pupils really flourish. They enjoy lessons immensely and work together well. Relationships between adults and pupils are excellent and behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Pupils develop a very good understanding of a range of different cultures in the wider world. They show great tolerance and respect towards each other and regularly reflect on their own and others' feelings. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles through exercise and diet and the school has just gained the Active Mark award. Pupils say they feel very safe and secure in school because teachers care for them a lot. Class councils provide opportunities for pupils to express their views. Pupils make significant contributions to the wider community, raising money for a number of charities, including a school in Nepal. They develop good academic and personal skills which prepare them well for the next stages in education and future lives. Attendance is well above average and reflects the very positive atmosphere within the school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers' good planning and behaviour management creates excellent relationships with pupils and motivates them well. Pupils of all abilities are supported well and this helps them make good progress in learning. Teachers generate enthusiasm for learning. Teachers are currently using good strategies to improve levels of writing through opportunities to develop a range of different writing styles in subjects other than English. The impact of this focus can be seen but standards still need to be higher, particularly through more opportunities for independent

learning. Teachers, and teacher's assistants, work closely together successfully supporting pupils with learning and behaviour difficulties. Detailed records are kept of pupils' progress and this information is used to identify the next levels that each pupil or group should achieve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's curriculum is outstanding. The Foundation Stage curriculum provides a good balance of activities for children to work together and to make choices. In Years 1 to 6, the key areas of literacy and numeracy are balanced very well with other subjects. This balance shows in the cycle of stimulating curriculum topics. In addition, there is a very innovative approach every Friday afternoon when pupils of all ages and those from the special classes, join together in groups. They participate in a range of activities involving art, sport, music, information and communication technology and key life skills. Visits to a range of museums and exhibitions and visitors to the school all contribute to the thriving learning atmosphere. A wide range of extra-curricular activities and after school clubs is greatly enjoyed and appreciated by pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Outstanding levels of care and support enable pupils to feel safe and well looked after. Support for the wide range of needs of pupils and their families is very effective. This is particularly evident in the 'Enhanced Provision' classes for children with speech and/or language disorders. The school's efforts are greatly appreciated by parents. As one parent said, 'The standard of care is the best you could want for your child.' There is also very close involvement with relevant external agencies. Procedures for safeguarding children comply with requirements. Academic guidance is good but there is a need for more regular and consistent setting of challenging targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The new headteacher provides very effective leadership and has a clear strategic vision for ongoing improvement in the school. As the acting headteacher for over a year, he continued the development of the school. Teachers, parents and governors greatly appreciate his efforts. The school is effective in identifying key areas for improvement and its self-evaluation is accurate. The headteacher has created a new leadership team. Nearly all staff have responsibilities for different areas of the school's work but developments are at an early stage. Nevertheless, the school's work in relation to inclusion is particularly well developed and is reflected in the pupils' outstanding personal development and good progress. Governors, many of them new, are active and supportive. They all play important roles in monitoring and evaluating the development of the school. Good use is made of the improved accommodation and resources to support the very thriving learning environment. The positive elements within the leadership and management provide the school with good capacity to improve further.

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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?	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	1
The behaviour of learners	1
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	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?	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?	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	1
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

5 March 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of West Horndon Primary School, West Horndon, Essex, CM13 3TR

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when I visited your school. I really enjoyed meeting you all.

When we talked to each other, you told me you enjoy your lessons a lot and were proud of your school. I agree with you. You felt that teachers care for you and help you a lot, and they do. Your behaviour is excellent. You are very polite and sensible, get on very well together and help each other a lot. You obviously enjoy your Friday afternoons when you work together with different age groups and learn about all sorts of subjects. Teachers teach you well and make your lessons very interesting. You work hard and are keen to learn more skills.

You are good at mathematics and science and almost as good in English. You enjoy sport and have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lives. You have lots of after school activities which you really like. I congratulate you on the funds you are raising to help the school in Nepal. It is really lovely to see how much you want to help those poor children.

I have asked your headteacher and staff to do two things to make your school even better. Firstly, I want the teachers to work with you and challenge you more often so that you make quicker progress and reach even higher standards in all subjects. You can help them because I know you want to do even better in your tests. Secondly, I have asked your teachers to make sure that you have more opportunities to become better at writing.

Keep working hard at all the things you enjoy doing in school. I wish you all every success in the future.

David Manuel

Lead inspector