

# West Hill Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	118587
<b>Local Authority</b>	Kent
<b>Inspection number</b>	313003
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 June 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Terry Elston

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	490
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Francis Honey
<b>Headteacher</b>	Pauline Hindle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>School address</b>	Dartford Road Dartford DA1 3DZ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01322 226019
<b>Fax number</b>	01322 220121

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This large school admits pupils from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds, but few are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is a little lower than that found nationally, as is the number who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Despite falling rolls in the area, this school is regularly oversubscribed.

## 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 held in high regard by the local community. Parents are justifiably very pleased with the education provided and the good progress their children make. They talk about their children 'blossoming' and 'coming on in leaps and bounds'. Children enter the school with skills that are below the level expected nationally. They make a good start in the Reception classes, where they settle easily into school life and attain well in all areas of their development. By the time they leave in Year 6, pupils' standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science and this represents good achievement. In English, while standards in writing are not quite as high as in reading, they are improving quickly as teachers provide more writing tasks that stimulate pupils' imagination. Over recent years, boys have achieved better than girls and this remains the case, particularly in reading, science and mathematics. Boys are always eager to show off their skills, and while their hands shoot up as soon as the teacher asks a question, girls will often sit back and let them do the work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they are supported well by teachers and skilled teaching assistants, and parents speak highly of the progress they make. Pupils also achieve well in art and design, physical education and information and communication technology (ICT).

Pupils relish their successes and enjoy school. They attend regularly, respond enthusiastically to the significant challenges set for them and always try to do their best. As one pupil said, 'The teachers make you work really hard, but you feel really good when you've done it!' Adults expect the best behaviour and that is what they get. They apply the school rules fairly and consistently so that pupils develop an exceptional sense of right and wrong. Pupils think very deeply about those less fortunate than themselves and raise funds enthusiastically for local and international charities. They work very well in groups and discuss one another's views sensibly. From the moment they enter the Reception classes, the school gives them many opportunities to take responsibility for their community and they do it well. The school council, for example, is enterprising in its ideas and has helped to make significant improvements in the lunchtime arrangements and the toilets.

Pupils are justified in feeling their teachers do a good job and appreciate the way they make learning fun. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to illustrate their lessons and pupils enjoy watching words and pictures pop up on to the screen. Lessons are a good balance between the teacher teaching new skills and pupils working in groups or with 'talking partners' to make the best of each other's abilities.

An important factor in pupils' enjoyment of school is the well-planned curriculum. It provides important work on basic literacy and numeracy skills while providing good opportunities to enjoy creative subjects such as art and music. The curriculum includes valuable work on how to live healthy lives and pupils speak knowledgeably about the best foods to eat, the importance of regular exercise and the dangers of smoking. This provision, together with pupils' good literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, ensures that they are well prepared for the future.

Pupils say how safe they feel at school because the staff care for them so well. The systems for health and safety and child protection are applied rigorously and monitored regularly by staff and governors. Pupils know who to turn to if they are troubled and are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously.

The school benefits from strong and purposeful leadership by the headteacher. She has a clear vision for the school's future and high expectations of all its members. Other leaders share this commitment and they make an effective team. They analyse pupils' performance in detail, and use the information well to set the school's priorities in the improvement plan. However, this plan lacks a clear focus on outcomes such as improved standards so that the effectiveness of initiatives can be evaluated. Governors are knowledgeable, enthusiastic and fully involved in improving the school.

These many strengths explain why the school has made good progress since the last inspection and show that it is well set to improve still further.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is good. They make good progress, and by the end of the year their attainments are above average in all areas. The teaching and learning are good with teachers and teaching assistants making an effective team. The teaching of reading and writing skills is particularly effective and children achieve very well in these areas. Teachers generally take good account of the wide variation in children's abilities in the class, but occasionally the work set is too easy for some and too hard for others. The well-organised and attractive classrooms and the use of familiar daily resources contribute much to children's learning and enjoyment. One parent's views were typical when writing, 'My child can't wait to get to school in the morning!' The stimulating curriculum provides many opportunities for children to develop their social skills and independence. The leadership and management of the provision are good, and ensure that it runs smoothly with a clear focus on children's achievements.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that the teaching and curriculum provide sufficient opportunities for girls to achieve as well as they can.
- Establish clear ways of measuring the success of the school's improvement planning in terms of pupils' higher standards.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and pupils achieve well. In the infant classes, pupils build well on the good foundations laid in the Reception classes, and standards by Year 2 are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to thrive and standards by Year 6 are well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. Boys attain higher standards than girls in reading, mathematics and science, and have done so for some years. The school recognises this, and is rightly looking at ways to improve the teaching and curricular planning in order to get the best out of girls.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils' enjoyment of school shows in the proud way they talk about it. They describe their lessons as 'lots of fun' and enjoy the many clubs after school. Pupils' high standard of behaviour helps them learn quickly and forge strong relationships with staff and each other. Their

exceptional spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clearly evident as they reflect deeply about issues such as poverty, and write sensitively about their feelings. One pupil, when describing memories of being on the beach as a small child, wrote, 'The feeling of the sand comforting me was a blanket of golden warmth.' They take a full part in the community and relish taking responsibility, for example as members of the school council and as peer mediators. They enjoy a healthy lifestyle and are very enthusiastic about the fruit and vegetables provided at meal times. They love the residential trips to the Isle of Wight that help prepare them for the future. Pupils have a thorough awareness of other cultures and lifestyles gained from many opportunities to study how other people live and through contacts with schools abroad. They have an increasing knowledge of what they need to do to improve their work, but this varies across the school and some look blank when questioned about their targets.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers work hard and with great success at making lessons interesting so that pupils enjoy learning. By their imaginative use of interactive whiteboards, for example, teachers help pupils discover how to recognise three-dimensional shapes or use the correct number of syllables in a haiku poem. Teachers plan carefully to meet the learning needs of the different ages and abilities in the class, particularly in literacy and numeracy lessons, and this helps all groups to make good progress. Teachers establish excellent relationships in class by making the rules for behaviour clear and offering fulsome praise for pupils' achievements. Many lessons include question and answer sessions and while these generally work well, boys tend to dominate them and learn at a faster rate than girls. Teachers' marking is good, and provides helpful comments to help pupils improve. The good assessment systems show clearly the progress pupils are making in all subjects.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is a good balance between work to develop pupils' basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and that to promote their understanding of the arts. The school has done much recently to rectify pupils' weaknesses in problem solving, particularly in subjects such as science and mathematics, and these skills show significant improvement as a result. This approach works particularly well with boys, who relish the challenge. The school is now rightly focusing on raising girls' standards by providing greater links between subjects such as art and design, literacy, history and geography and encouraging pupils to think more creatively. A good programme of personal, social and health education encourages a healthy lifestyle and contributes significantly to pupils' development as caring and responsible citizens. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of popular after-school clubs, numerous visitors from the community and a good variety of trips to the local area.

### **Care, guidance and support**

#### **Grade: 2**

The good care, guidance and support are valued very highly by both pupils and parents. Adults make pupils feel safe and valued and ensure that they know who to turn to if they have worries. Teachers are thorough in their tracking of pupils' academic and personal development and set

challenging but achievable targets. However, not all teachers remind pupils of these goals often enough and some pupils forget what they need to do to get to the next levels. Health and safety procedures are good and reviewed regularly to ensure pupils' well-being. As a result, the school is a secure and happy place in which pupils enjoy learning. Child protection systems are robust and staff have had good recent training. The school does much to encourage pupils to adopt healthy lifestyles, as has been recognised by a recent Healthy Schools award. The school has strong links with other professionals such as education welfare officers and health staff, who provide valuable support.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher leads well and is highly respected by pupils, staff and parents. Her strong commitment to high standards goes alongside a determination that pupils should develop their personal and social skills to the full. This has helped create a happy, successful school where pupils do well in all aspects of their development. The headteacher is supported well by other senior staff, who share her high expectations and enthusiasm. The leaders are good at using data to see where the school's performance can be improved further. This process provides the development plan with a good set of relevant priorities, but it lacks clear criteria to judge whether the actions have resulted in higher standards. Subject leaders are good at supporting colleagues, and those with limited experience have benefited from effective guidance to develop their leadership skills. The school has useful partnerships with other schools that enable staff to share expertise and develop the skills of gifted and talented pupils. Governors play an important part in school improvement. They analyse data competently and are not afraid to hold the school to account.

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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?	2
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 <sup>1</sup> 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	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

<sup>1</sup> 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**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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

27 June 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Hill Primary School, Dartford, DA1 3DZ

Thank you for your important contributions to this inspection. It was a pleasure to meet so many of you who showed such a pride in your good school. The inspectors enjoyed talking to some of you, who told us a lot about the school.

What we found out about your school:

- You work hard in lessons and make good progress, especially in English, mathematics and science; boys do really well and girls are not far behind.
- You have a good knowledge of how to keep safe and live healthy lives.
- Your teachers try really hard to make lessons fun and help you when you find things difficult.
- You are keen to take responsibility around the school and do it very well.
- You enjoy the activities planned for you and the wide range of visits and visitors that make learning interesting.
- Your behaviour is outstanding; it was a pleasure to watch you listen so carefully to your teachers and take such good care of each other.
- The staff and governors run the school well and know how to make it even better.
- All the adults take very good care of you and are always there to help you if you are upset.

What we would like the school to do now:

- Make sure that girls progress as well as boys in all subjects; girls can help by answering more questions in lessons and not letting boys take over!
- The school's leaders need to be able to check that the improvements they are making are helping you to make even better progress.

With our best wishes for the future

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston Lead inspector