

Wilmington Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118865
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	313126
Inspection date	5 June 2008
Reporting inspector	Joan Greenfield

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	210
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul James
Headteacher	Duncan Finlayson
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2004
School address	Common Lane Wilmington Dartford DA2 7DF
Telephone number	01322 274080
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues:

the impact of the school's actions to address the dip in performance in 2007 and raise standards and achievement further

the effectiveness of systems to track and assess pupils' progress, set challenging targets, and influence teachers' planning

the impact of leadership and management at all levels in driving forward school improvement.

Evidence was gathered from visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning, discussions with pupils, staff and two governors, the views of parents and a scrutiny of the school's documentation. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in this report.

Description of the school

Wilmington is an average sized primary school, which is popular and oversubscribed. Most pupils are White British, with the remainder coming from a range of other heritages. Very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average.

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. Its friendly atmosphere and the staff's genuine concern for the welfare of pupils make it an effective place for pupils to learn and develop. The school's motto of 'Sharing as we learn together' is evident in its day-to-day work. Almost all parents are overwhelmingly positive about what the school does for their children, with the following comments summarising the views of many: 'Our children enjoy going to school, are very happy and do well', and 'There is a real community spirit in the school.' The very few parents who have some specific concerns, for example on homework or their child's progress, also express their confidence in the quality of the school's work. The school works well with parents and external agencies to support pupils' learning.

Pupils achieve well during their time in school and standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. The school's national test results in Year 6 have been well above average for the past five years, although there was a dip in 2007 when they were average. This was the result of a higher proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the cohort and fewer pupils than expected reaching the higher levels, especially in science. Actions taken by the headteacher and staff during the year have reversed this situation and the school's checks on pupils' progress and their work show that standards are back to their above average position of previous years.

Children start school with skills and experiences that are typical of children of this age. The well-planned curriculum and effective teaching enable children to make good progress in Reception so that standards are above average across the areas of learning by the time they start in Year 1. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 1 and 2. The national test results in 2007 at the end of Year 2 were well above average, having improved consistently over the past five years, and are likely to be similar in 2008. The school's involvement in the 'Reading Recovery' programme and the 'Better Reading Partners' scheme has resulted in significant improvements in the reading skills of selected pupils. Most groups, including pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make consistently good progress overall. However, on occasions, some of the more able pupils mark time too much and are not given enough challenging work to stretch them further. This is one of the reasons why more pupils do not reach the higher levels in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6. Some pupils say they are capable of working harder and doing more difficult work, commenting that they sometimes have to wait too long for the rest of the class to catch up before they can move forwards.

The good teaching and a well-planned curriculum are key factors in helping pupils do well and ensuring that they are well prepared for their future lives. Teachers plan their lessons effectively and provide pupils with a variety of interesting activities to engage them. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and the work they do, saying that 'lessons are fun' and 'teachers help us learn'. Relationships between pupils and adults and pupils themselves are excellent, resulting in a calm but purposeful environment for learning. Teachers manage their classes well and teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning. Cross-curricular planning helps pupils make sense of their learning and is reinforced by the homework projects that pupils undertake. A few parents question the value of these projects, preferring more structured work in English and mathematics. However, the evidence from talking to pupils about their projects shows that such activities are valuable and help to develop their basic skills, including those of working independently. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors, opportunities to study French, Italian, Japanese and Chinese, and engage in musical activities such as the

school orchestra, all enrich pupils' learning. They also make a strong contribution to their good personal development.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and is clearly reflected in their positive attitudes, the way they help each other and the excellent contribution they make to the school and wider community. The school council is particularly influential in contributing to the school's development. Older pupils support younger pupils with reading and selected pupils from each class act as 'buddies' to help others. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to eat healthily and follow a healthy lifestyle. This is shown in the high numbers of pupils that take part in the wide range of sporting activities provided. Pupils behave well and say there is very little unkindness. They are confident that staff will help them if they have a problem.

Pastoral care and support are real strengths as staff know the children extremely well, especially those that require additional support or have particular needs. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils and ensuring their health and safety are robust. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully during the year but the checking of their progress over a longer period is not as well established. Through teachers' marking and verbal feedback, pupils receive appropriate guidance on what they need to do to improve their work but are unsure of their personal targets.

With the strong support of the governors and other senior staff, the headteacher has continued to lead the school extremely well since the last inspection. His calm and sensitive approach provides an excellent role model for staff and pupils. Together, they have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and priorities for development as shown in the school's improvement plan. Successful action has been taken to ensure that standards this year return to the above average standards of previous years. The involvement of staff in reviewing and developing provision is good. Governors are well informed about the work of the school and provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher and senior staff. The school has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children receive a good start to their education in the Foundation Stage. Parents are particularly positive about the high levels of care and support their children receive. Children's skills on entry to the Reception class are typical of children of this age. Through the enthusiastic teaching and the support of the experienced teaching assistant, they make good progress and achieve well. Standards of the current cohort are on course to be above average by the time they transfer to Year 1. Relative weaknesses in their literacy skills are being tackled successfully through placing greater emphasis on linking sounds and letters. Good planning ensures that children have a suitable balance between activities led by adults and those they choose for themselves. Staff keep careful records, including photographic evidence, of children's progress, as was seen in a review of the activities they had undertaken during the day. The teacher gave specific guidance and encouragement to individual children on what they had done well. This activity was particularly successful in developing positive attitudes to learning and children's self-esteem. With the support of senior staff, the Foundation Stage is led and managed well.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in the national tests at the end of Year 2 and Year 6.

- Provide additional challenging work to stretch the more able pupils further so that they are working to full capacity all the time.

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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?	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 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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
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	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

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wilmington Primary School, Wilmington, DA2 7DF

Thank you for welcoming me to your school recently. I enjoyed my discussions with members of the school council and seeing you all at work and play. Some of you told me how much you enjoy school and like all the interesting things that you do, especially the project work. This letter is to tell you what I found out about your school.

- You go to a good school that helps you to achieve well and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6.
- Your behaviour is good. You are kind and polite and look after each other well. I was impressed with all that the school council has done to improve things for you.
- Large numbers of you take part in the various clubs and sporting activities the school arranges for you and you have an excellent understanding of how to keep healthy.
- The good teaching helps you to learn well as the activities you do are interesting. I particularly liked the way children in the Reception class studied the snails they found under the wheelbarrow!
- Staff take very good care of you and make sure that you are safe. They check your progress regularly and give you the right kind of support when you need it.
- The headteacher, with the help of other staff and governors, leads the school extremely well and knows what needs to be done to make the school even better. They are all working hard to do so.

I have asked the school to do two things to make it even better.

- Help more of you to reach the higher levels in the national tests in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Provide those of you who are more able with challenging work to stretch you further.

I hope that you will all continue to work hard and do your very best, both now and in the future.

Yours sincerely

Mrs J Greenfield Lead inspector