

Westwood First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124099
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	314807
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Marion Thompson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	290
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Maureen Wiskin
Headteacher	Vicki Woollacott
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Westwood Road Leek ST13 8DL
Telephone number	01538 483000
Fax number	01538 483005

Age group	4–9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large first school, which has a large Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The great majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average. The school has gained the Green Flag Eco Schools Award, Healthy Schools status, Active Mark 2007 and Dyslexia Friendly status (Level 1). Over the last academic year, the school has experienced a large number of staffing changes, including in the leadership of the school. Following many temporary arrangements, staffing is now stable. There is before and after school care for children aged four to twelve and separate pre-school provision for children aged two-and-a-half to four on the school site, both run privately.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a sound education for its pupils, and some aspects of its work are good. Teaching, leadership and management and the curriculum, which are currently satisfactory, are improving rapidly. Provision in the EYFS is good. The school has the overwhelming support of parents, who really appreciate the good care, support and guidance the school provides for their children. As one parent, typical of many, correctly wrote, 'I always feel that my child is in a safe environment, where staff really care about children's views and their welfare.' Another accurately commented, 'This school treats every child as an individual.'

Parents rightly value the major contribution the school makes to children's good personal development. Pupils enjoy school, they pay good attention to safety and attendance is well above average. Behaviour is good and pupils' enthusiasm for learning is evident in most lessons. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils, even the youngest, sing with gusto in assembly and show respect for others. However, in this largely mono-cultural school, pupils have little knowledge about the range of faiths and cultures in Britain because there is limited coverage in the curriculum. The contribution pupils make to the school and local community is good, because the school responds well to children's suggestions, such as initiating collections for charity. Through the lifestyle they adopt, pupils show that they are aware of the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise.

Achievement is improving because of the strong emphasis placed by the headteacher on raising standards. She is soundly supported by a purposeful senior team and hardworking staff. Self-evaluation is sound, although occasionally over-generous, and planning is effective. Areas for improvement are carefully prioritised and support is provided to ensure their success; for example the subject co-ordinators, some of whom are new to their roles, are rapidly gaining in subject and managerial expertise because of well-focused staff development. The school has set challenging targets, which are raising expectations about what pupils are capable of achieving. Governors provide good support for the school. The level of challenge they provide, whilst satisfactory, is less effective.

Pupils reach standards that are broadly average by the time they are in Year 4 and their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress, because they are supported well. Parents frequently comment on recent improvements in reading, where the school has introduced methods that have helped their children to develop a keen interest in books. This includes non-fiction texts, which boys, in particular, find interesting. Standards in writing, science and mathematics are beginning to rise, and pupils are starting to make better progress, because identified areas of weakness are being tackled robustly. A number of pupils, especially the more able, do not make as much progress as they should, because in a minority of lessons, teaching lacks sufficient pace and challenge to meet their needs.

Improvements in teaching and the curriculum contribute to pupils' more rapid progress. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, and an increasing proportion is good and occasionally excellent. Throughout the school, better use is being made of ongoing assessment to help pupils to improve their work. The reviewed curriculum is engaging pupils' interests, but occasionally does not provide enough challenge, particularly for more able pupils. Academic guidance is good. Careful marking, constructive feedback and opportunities for peer- and self-assessment in lessons are helping pupils to understand how to improve their work.

The school has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and has sound capacity to improve further. Pupils' good social development and sound basic skills prepare them satisfactorily for the future.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the EYFS is good and it is well led and managed. Children have levels of skills around those expected for their age on entry. They achieve well, reaching levels above those expected on entry to Year 1. They settle well, because the school forms good links with parents and pre-school providers.

Staff place a high priority on children's health, safety and welfare, which results in good personal development. Children are encouraged to develop good eating habits by having fruit and water and have good opportunities for physical exercise, whatever the weather. Because staff take good care of them, children play well on their own and in groups, displaying much self-confidence. Teaching provides a good level of challenge, because it is based on a careful assessment of children's needs. Children listen attentively and concentrate, often for long periods of time, and they contribute confidently in class. In the outside area, for example, children looked at what happens to ice when it melts, having felt ice-filled balloons earlier in the classroom. This improved their vocabulary and spoken language as well as increasing their knowledge. Children have access to a wide range of carefully chosen activities across all areas of learning, both indoors and outside, that are well matched to their needs. There is a good balance of teacher-led and child-initiated activities, so children become increasingly independent. Parents value the good communication they have with staff and appreciate the safe, stimulating and secure environment provided.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement in writing, mathematics and science, especially for the most able pupils, so that the challenging targets set are reached.
- Improve teaching and the curriculum so that pupils are consistently presented with lessons that are conducted at a good pace and with an appropriate level of challenge.
- Improve pupils' understanding of the beliefs and traditions of the wide range of cultures found in Britain today, by providing sufficient planned opportunities.

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

Standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards in reading are now above average. By the time they leave, most pupils read fluently with enjoyment and understanding. This is a result of the successful strategies the school has introduced. In writing and science, standards are broadly average. Pupils are beginning to make faster progress, because of better use of assessment and a closer focus on areas identified for improvement, such as writing complex sentences in English and investigations in science. Standards in mathematics are below average, but the rate of improvement over recent months has increased. Progress is now at least satisfactory. Rates of progress in learning vary across the school, with

pupils making most progress in lessons which provide good pace. In a minority of lessons, pupils, especially the most able, make slower progress than they could, because the work lacks pace and challenge. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because support is well organised.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school because they like their teachers and the activities they do in lessons. Their attendance is well above average. They feel safe and say there is no bullying. They also feel secure going to any adult if they are anxious or upset. Most pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, although they are occasionally a little distracted when not fully engaged by the lesson. Pupils have a good grasp of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They make a good contribution to the school and local community. There is an active school council and pupils initiate their own ideas for charity collections; for example, some Year 2 pupils raised money for those affected by the Chinese earthquake. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall. Pupils know right from wrong and have well-developed social skills. They are polite and respectful to each other and to visitors; for example, they readily help by opening doors. However, pupils do not have a good enough understanding of the beliefs and values of minority ethnic groups living in Britain today. Good working relationships between pupils and broadly average standards in basic skills ensure that pupils are soundly prepared for future life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most lessons have clear learning objectives, so that pupils understand what they are trying to achieve. Teachers provide opportunities for pupils to assess their own progress, which is helping them to improve their work. Marking is mainly good, and outlines the next steps pupils need to take. The best lessons provide pupils with a high level of challenge and have good pace. Pupils respond by working enthusiastically. In satisfactory lessons, learning objectives tend to be less well focused, and activities lack pace and challenge, especially for the most able pupils. On occasions, this leads to a little inattention. Relationships with teachers are good and motivate pupils to learn. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are provided with well targeted support, especially those with behavioural difficulties.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Curriculum requirements are fully met. There are strengths in the way the school has made links between subjects that make the curriculum as a whole more relevant and interesting to pupils, especially for the boys. The range of activities, visits and visitors is good and widens pupils' experience; for example, pupils learn circus skills, visit concert halls, and the Gladstone Pottery, and take part in a wide range of musical and drama activities. The range of out-of-school clubs, sports and arts activities is good and a large number of pupils take part in them. The personal, health, social and citizenship programme supports pupils well with their social and emotional development. However, the curriculum does not always provide a high enough level of challenge, especially for the more able pupils, and there are limited opportunities to develop

an understanding of the multicultural society in Britain today. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school has thorough and rigorous procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Procedures to deal with vulnerable pupils are good. There are very good relationships between staff, pupils and families, leading to good pastoral care and support. Parents' views of the school are exceptionally positive and they appreciate the efforts of all staff. Procedures to deal with unacceptable behaviour are effective and fully understood by pupils. This has led to better behaviour in class. Academic guidance is good. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully in English and mathematics, but is not yet tracked as closely in science. Assessment information is used to set targets. Pupils know their targets in numeracy and literacy, they can explain what they mean and, for the most part, know what they need to do to improve. This is contributing to their improving achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher provides a good sense of educational direction for the school, focused on improving achievement. She is effectively supported by a hardworking staff and senior team. Self-evaluation is accurate and is based on a thorough analysis of the school's performance. As a result, pupils make good progress in reading and are beginning to make faster progress in mathematics, writing and science. The school makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion, but pupils' knowledge and understanding of the range of faiths and cultures across the national community is limited. Subject co-ordinators' work is sound overall and good in some subjects, such as in literacy. Governors provide good support for the school, for example using their individual expertise well in guiding and informing a recent school building project. Governors' monitoring of the work of the school is satisfactory.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	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	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

5 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westwood First School, Leek, ST13 8DL

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school, and for your politeness. Many of your parents replied to our questionnaire, so please thank them for us. We found that the school provides you with a sound education. Children in the Reception class get off to a good start because teaching and the programme of activities are well planned. Children settle quickly because they are well cared for. Staff work closely with parents to make sure children feel safe and happy.

By Year 4, you reach broadly average standards. You enjoy lessons, attend very regularly, work hard and behave well. All of this is helping you to make satisfactory and often better progress in your learning. Reading is popular throughout the school and parents have noticed how much it has improved. You are beginning to make faster progress in writing, mathematics and science, so keep up your efforts! Teaching, marking and the curriculum are also getting better and the comments teachers make to you about how you are getting on are helping you to improve your work faster.

The school provides good care for you and a wide range of activities you enjoy. All staff help you to develop your personal skills well. You know how to stay healthy and safe and you show care and respect for each other. You take your responsibilities seriously. The headteacher and staff are working hard to make sure things keep getting better.

In order to make sure things continue to improve, we have asked the school to do the following:

- help you to reach your targets in writing, mathematics and science, especially if you find the work quite easy
- make sure lessons are at a good pace and that they are pitched just right for you all
- make sure you learn about the beliefs and ways of life of all the people who live in Britain today, by including this in the school's planning.

With best wishes

Marion Thompson

Lead inspector