

East Wickham Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101406
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	323458
Inspection dates	3–4 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Selwyn Ward

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	270
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	42
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Brendan Hollyer
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Manzi
Date of previous school inspection	22 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wickham Street Welling DA16 3BP
Telephone number	020 8854 0698
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Age group	3–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Around two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage. Other pupils come from a variety of minority ethnic backgrounds. The largest group are pupils of Black African heritage. A very small proportion of the pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and covers a wide range of different learning needs. Around half of the children in the Reception classes start Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery, with others joining from alternative pre-school provision. The school operates an additional Pathways Assessment Nursery for up to 12 children with special educational needs from across the borough. There is extended schools provision through a privately run and separately inspected breakfast and after school club.

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. The improvement since the last inspection has been impressive. Through their very thorough monitoring and evaluation of all that the school does, the headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors have together raised previously satisfactory teaching, curriculum and care, guidance and support to provision that is good. As a result, there has been a strong and sustained rise in standards. Standards in reading, writing and mathematics are now above average. In both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2, pupils of all abilities and from different backgrounds make good progress and achieve well. Children's rate of progress, however, is faster in the Reception Year than in Nursery. This is because the activities provided in the Nursery are not always adapted so that the children build on what they have learnt before. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress because they benefit from well-tailored support. This is true throughout the school, including in the Pathways Assessment Nursery.

In the school's mission statement governors set out their aim 'to create a secure and caring learning environment, fostering supportive links between school, home and the wider community'. In this the school is very successful, as parents' exceptionally positive views confirm. As one parent explained, 'The headteacher and all the staff have made East Wickham Infants a happy, high achieving environment.'

The mission statement goes on to say that, 'Together, we seek to achieve the greatest educational opportunities for pupils of all abilities and backgrounds, which will provide stimulation, challenge and enjoyment.' Again, the success of this is very evident, not only in their achievement but also in their good personal development. A parent wrote of how their daughter 'enjoys going to school and feels safe and happy being there'. The harmonious relationships between pupils from different backgrounds is at least in part the result of the way the children all learn and follow East Wickham's 'golden rules' to 'be kind and be truthful' and in the impressive way in which pupils' horizons are broadened to appreciate other people's beliefs, cultures and ways of life. It is this consideration and concern for others that makes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development outstanding. Support from their teachers and the comments that staff write in pupils' workbooks help the pupils in improving their work. Pupils all have targets, but these are not always specific enough to be helpful to each child.

The remarkable across-the-board improvement since the last inspection is due to the outstanding leadership and management of the headteacher and her team. Some grades in their self-evaluation have been overly positive, but this reflects their appreciation of how far the school has come rather than any lack of realism on their part. Key to the school leaders' success is the way that they have raised expectations of staff, of parents, and of the pupils themselves. The successes over the past three years show the school's excellent capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The children thrive in a stimulating, happy and caring environment. Thorough induction arrangements ensure children settle readily into the Early Years Foundation Stage. Parents particularly praise 'the good communication between staff and parents and children'. Children start school with skills that are generally below those expected for their ages. As a result of

good teaching, they make good progress to reach average standards by the start of Year 1. Progress is particularly good in communication, language and literacy as a result of successful initiatives such as the recently introduced programme for teaching sounds and letters (phonics). Progress is fastest in Reception, because in the Nursery the activities arranged for the children, and adults' questioning, do not always push the children to build on what they have learnt before. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led, with staff keeping a careful track of each child's progress. The Pathways Assessment Nursery provides a very secure and well-managed start to the education of the children who attend. All staff work unstintingly to provide for the individual special educational needs of each child.

What the school should do to improve further

- Tailor activities for Nursery children that better help them to build on what they already know.
- Ensure that where pupils have targets, they are specific to the needs of each pupil.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage to attain average standards by the start of Year 1. They make similarly good progress in Years 1 and 2, so that standards at the end of Year 2 have been consistently above average for the last three years. This represents considerable improvement since the last inspection, particularly in relation to more able pupils. Previously, these pupils made slower progress than others, but they are now doing equally well, as shown by the above-average proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 3 in the Year 2 assessments. Because they benefit from good support from teachers and teaching assistants, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language also make good progress. For some, the rate of progress is exceptional. The good progress that pupils make in their key literacy and numeracy skills prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils get on well together. They have a very strong and growing awareness of the world and community around them, developed through activities such as the links with a school in Ghana and a project where pupils considered what it means to be British. The pupils' positive attitudes are reflected in the high take-up of out-of-class activities such as recorder club. Attendance has improved steadily and is now average. The 'morning massage' is enjoyed by the children and helps them to be calm and relaxed at the beginning of the school day. Pupils' behaviour is consistently good as a result of the school's orderly routines. Pupils are attentive and keep on task, but they are sometimes compliant rather than enthusiastic in lessons. They have a good awareness of what constitutes a healthy lifestyle and they thoroughly enjoy their morning fruit. Pupils make an outstanding contribution to the school community. Those in Year 2 take their extra responsibilities seriously and are enthusiastic about helping people. One child said, 'We listen to each other's ideas in school council so the school can be more attractive.'

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Throughout the school, teachers know their pupils well and the good relationships help to motivate the pupils to work hard and do their best. Teachers have high expectations, both of behaviour and of what their pupils can achieve. They generally make good use of questioning to check on pupils' understanding and to encourage them to explain their work. Among the improvements since the last inspection is the much better match of work to pupils' different abilities. It is a change that parents have noticed. They too report that 'teachers give the children challenging work'. Nevertheless, school leaders are ambitious for further improvement. In their monitoring they identify that teachers do not always give able pupils books that extend their reading skills. Teaching assistants are deployed well to support particularly, but not exclusively, those pupils who need extra help with their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum succeeds in catering for the needs of pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those who need extra help with their learning. It celebrates the cultural diversity of the school and its locality, drawing on and looking beyond the pupils' own cultural backgrounds. There is a very good level of enrichment. Themed weeks, such as the recent multicultural week, during which children dressed in traditional national costumes and watched a steel band, contribute to pupils' good enjoyment of school. East Wickham's Activemark and Eco awards attest to the breadth of its provision for sport, physical exercise and the environment. The school is part of a project aimed at organising the curriculum throughout the school along the lines of the areas of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The development of creative links between subjects is still at an early stage, and there is scope for strengthening them. School leaders recognise that pupils would benefit from more opportunities to use information and communication technology. They have very recently bought a set of laptop computers to meet this need, but these are not yet in use.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Rigorous procedures are in place to ensure the safety and protection of all pupils. Measures to discourage avoidable absence have shown steady success. Very close liaison with outside agencies ensures that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive the extra specialist support that they need. This is particularly so for children in the Pathways Assessment Nursery. It has proven to be very effective in helping these children to make good progress in managing and overcoming some of their difficulties. Throughout the school, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are very well supported through their individual education plans and the targets that are set for them. The progress that these pupils make is carefully monitored and their targets are reviewed frequently and regularly revised. Targets for other pupils are not all as specific. Although all pupils benefit from good oral and written feedback on their work, targets that are labelled as individual are sometimes too broad to be of much help in focusing pupils' efforts.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

A shared vision, and hugely raised expectations, have enabled the headteacher, leadership team and governors to secure considerable improvements in the quality of provision, standards and in the achievement of pupils of all abilities. Leaders at all levels are involved in the meticulous monitoring of lessons and of individual pupils' progress. Leaders' feedback to teachers is detailed and has helped to raise the quality of teaching and accelerate pupils' learning. The careful tracking of each pupil's progress has enabled leaders to quickly spot when a child falls behind and to put in place extra support to help them to catch up. Governors take very seriously their duty to promote community cohesion, and this has become a well-established feature of all that the school does. Their evaluation of the impact of the school's work in this field rightly points to the growing interest that pupils take in the world around them. Pupils' visits to the local church and Hindu temple have brought to life what they learn about different faiths, and their links with schools in Africa, India and the USA have started them thinking much more about the wider world. Within the local community pupils voice increasing concerns over ecological issues. Within the school the impact of the outstanding commitment to community cohesion is evident in the harmonious relationships between children from different backgrounds and their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school's work to inform and involve parents is much appreciated. As a parent commented, 'All the staff are very friendly and approachable, and I feel have the best interests of the children always at the forefront.'

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

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?	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/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	1
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	3
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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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	1
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**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of East Wickham Infant School, Welling, DA16 3BP

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Well done to those of you who braved the snow to get in on Tuesday.

East Wickham Infants is a good school. We were impressed by how much the headteacher, staff and governors have managed to improve things over the last three years. Children in the Nursery and Reception Years get off to a good start, although we have suggested that those in the Nursery are given more opportunities to build on what they have learnt before. Because the teaching is good, you all make good progress and you leave the school with above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.

We were pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how well you get on with each other. This all helps to make the school such a friendly and happy place. It is also good to see that your attendance is now much better. I hope your parents will make sure you do not miss school unnecessarily. One of the most striking things about your school is just how interested you all are in learning about what life is like for different people in Britain and the wider world. The children in the school in Ghana are, I am sure, very grateful for the equipment you have collected and sent them, and I enjoyed looking at the work you have done on what it means to be British. That plate of 'fish and chips' on the wall looked almost good enough to eat!

You feel safe at school because the staff take very good care of you. They cater especially well for those who need extra help with their learning, including the children in the specialist Nursery. We know that the teachers help you through the way they mark your work, but we have asked the school to make your individual targets sharper so that you all know exactly what you need to do to do better. You can help too by making sure that you know your targets and do your very best to achieve them.

Best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector