

Western Road Community Primary School

Inspection report

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| Unique Reference Number | 114406 |
| Local Authority | East Sussex |
| Inspection number | 326007 |
| Inspection dates | 30 April –1 May 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.

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number on roll | |
| School (total) | 201 |
| 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 | Alison Lansley |
| Headteacher | Garry Thompson |
| Date of previous school inspection | 12 July 2006 |
| Date of previous funded early education inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Date of previous childcare inspection | Not previously inspected |
| School address | Southover High Street Lewes BN7 1JB |
| Telephone number | 01273 473013 |

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| Age group | 4–11 |
| Inspection dates | 30 April –1 May 2009 |
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Fax number

01273 470233

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is a little smaller than average. The great majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much smaller than in other schools. The headteacher was appointed in April 2007. Western Road currently offers an extended school day through after-school provision.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Western Road provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Children have consistently achieved well in the Early Years Foundation Stage to attain above average standards by the end of the Reception Year, but the school has not fully capitalised on this good start. Pupils have not traditionally made enough progress in Years 1 and 2, so that standards in the Year 2 assessments have generally been average. These average standards have mostly persisted through Years 3 to 6. However, the picture is an improving one. The headteacher, leaders and governors have a very accurate view of the school and of where improvements are needed. The measures they have introduced are beginning to yield results. This is strongly appreciated by the great majority of parents, many of whom comment favourably on the improvements they have seen over the past two years. They describe how a previously coasting school where pupils underachieved has moved to a position where achievement is satisfactory and improving. As one parent put it, 'Western Road has been transformed from a school pootling along to a more dynamic school which still retains its caring, happy atmosphere.' Like the headteacher, parents share the view that the school still has further to go. One summed up the views of many in saying, 'The school has improved, but I still think the children should achieve more highly.'

School leaders have correctly identified that there were gaps in pupils' skills and understanding because of a lack of continuity between classes. The gaps are this year being plugged and the curriculum strengthened so that pupils can better build on what they have learnt before. The introduction of the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy has come later than in most other schools, but pupils benefit from good opportunities to enrich their learning. Leaders have made good use of expertise and support from the local authority in tackling the weaknesses in mathematics that were identified in the last inspection. They recognise that it is writing where pupils are not realising their full potential. The pupils are imaginative and expressive and draw on a wide vocabulary, but their writing is too often let down by careless spelling and punctuation and, sometimes, slapdash presentation. Pupils are not given enough encouragement to use dictionaries or wordbooks. Although the school has bought in tabletop displays that highlight elements of punctuation and are intended as prompts for pupils, these are not routinely used.

Throughout Western Road, the good relationships help to motivate the pupils. As a result, they behave well and mostly settle quickly to work in lessons. Pupils' good personal development is evident in their confidence and their keenness to learn. More rigorous assessment has meant that staff now identify more quickly any pupils who are slipping behind, with the school putting in place extra support. An improvement since the last inspection is the better match of work in lessons to pupils' different abilities, especially in mathematics. Teaching and learning are satisfactory rather than good, however, because some of the recent improvements are not consistently in place. School leaders have placed much emphasis on the importance of teachers setting out clear learning intentions. They generally do this at the start of lessons but they do not emphasise them enough during the lesson to help focus the pupils' attention on what they should be learning. Pupils are not routinely aware of the criteria against which they should measure their success in attaining the learning objectives. Marking varies in quality and pupils do not all have targets that help them to identify what they need to do to move their learning on. This weakness in academic guidance means that care, guidance and support is satisfactory rather than better, despite the very good arrangements for looking after pupils' welfare.

Even though many of the staff with management responsibilities are quite new to their roles and some are still finding their feet, leadership and management are good. Again, parents endorse this view in saying, 'We are pleased with the leadership of the school and the direction the school is taking.' The success of changes that have already been made shows the school's good capacity for sustained improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

'I could not have wished for a better start to their school careers.' This very positive statement from a parent is typical of the many very appreciative comments made about the well-run provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children's language and social skills when they start school vary from year to year. For the current Reception children, they are typical for their age. The good care children receive, skilful teaching and assessment, and interesting learning opportunities, all ensure that they make good progress in all of the areas of learning. Most have made very good progress in learning their sounds and letters so are now writing simple sentences with some support. By the end of the Reception Year, children reach levels in the early learning goals that are consistently above national averages. Children's personal and social skills and independence develop very well because the staff place a high priority on encouraging these. Children enjoy making their own choices, for instance when creating their own mini-books and watering the flowers in the outdoor potting shed. The class is very well resourced for learning, although space is rather tight in the newly developed outdoor area and the steps that lead down to it are not easy for little legs to negotiate.

What the school should do to improve further

- Guide pupils more on improving spellings, punctuation and the presentation of their written work.
- Ensure that pupils all have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn in each lesson and of how they can assess how well they are doing.
- Give pupils clear guidance through marking and individual targets that show them what they need to do to move their learning on.

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

The average standards attained in the Year 2 assessments show that pupils have not done as well as they should in relation to the above average standards attained by the end of the Reception Year. Standards in the Year 6 national tests have shown a sharply improved trend since the last inspection, although the standard of pupils' current work in Years 3 to 6 is not as high as the particularly able cohort of pupils attained in the 2008 tests. Pupils throughout the school are now routinely making the progress expected of them, although some could be pushed to do even better. Pupils of all abilities are now making much better progress in mathematics than at the time of the last inspection, but the technical accuracy of pupils' writing and, for some, their presentation means that they do not always do themselves justice in getting across their imaginative ideas. Pupils' key skills prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' comments that 'everyone here is friendly' reflect their enjoyment of school life. Pupils get along with one another well, fundraise for the wider community and those in need and show a keen interest in the lifestyles and beliefs of people from other cultures around the world. The pupils are lively and articulate. They enjoy the improved opportunities for competitive sport and to exercise for health and fun. Many are looking forward with eager anticipation to eating the healthy vegetables they are growing in playground plots. They take responsibility within the school community, for example by deciding on play equipment. Pupils behave well in class and around the school. They mostly listen carefully to their teachers and other adults but they do not always listen as well to each other's contributions in lessons. They understand the importance of keeping safe, including while using the Internet. They are clear about who can help them if they have any worries, explaining that, 'It is quite easy to approach teachers and talk to them.' Pupils' attendance is average and improving now that everyone is more aware of the school's expectations.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Staff have responded well to the headteacher's initiatives aimed at accelerating pupils' progress. Teachers now make good use of assessment information to plan work which, in the main, is matched to pupils' different capabilities. However, there is some variation in the use of teaching assistants. Often they are used well to support those children who need extra help with their learning but they are sometimes underutilised during teachers' lesson introductions. Although teachers set out at the start of lessons what it is that the pupils should be learning, there are too few reminders of these learning objectives during the lesson and pupils are not always aware of the teacher's success criteria for them. Teachers do not always take the opportunity to remind pupils of the need to check their spellings or to take care over the accurate punctuation of their written work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

School leaders' review of curriculum plans identified that there were significant gaps in pupils' skills development because of lack of continuity between classes. These gaps are this year being plugged. Several year groups have enjoyed having a taste of learning several different modern foreign languages, although this approach means that pupils' skills in any one specific foreign language are relatively modest. Links between subjects are developed as themed 'learning journeys' which help make learning more interesting and exciting for the pupils. Much of the current work in Year 6, for example, is imaginatively tied to their study of World War II, so that, in literacy lessons, pupils role-play as evacuees and they write with empathy about the plight of victims of the Nazis. Pupils are developing awareness of environmental issues, such as the need to conserve energy and recycle, through lessons and through extra-curricular activities. They benefit from good enrichment opportunities through well-attended clubs, the popular art and science weeks and through visits and visitors to school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

There are robust procedures for ensuring pupils are safe in school and for child protection. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is organised efficiently and enables them to make similar progress to their peers. The after-school club is a valuable addition to support for families and enjoyable for the children involved. There are good systems in place to encourage children to attend school regularly and these have led to fewer families taking occasional days off. There is a strong emphasis on celebrating the achievements of all pupils. This contributes both to pupils' confidence and to their sense of community. The academic guidance for pupils is much less well developed than these very good arrangements for pupils' welfare. Staff review pupils' progress regularly but there is no school-wide consistency in setting individual or class targets in English or mathematics or in marking. As a result, pupils are not always clear about what they need to do to improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

A number of parents describe the 'energetic and vibrant' leadership of the headteacher, and it is this that has driven the significant improvements over the past two years that are raising both the quality of provision and the standards and achievement of the pupils. Parents appreciate that although 'the school is still working out some of the kinks', it has already come a long way. A number comment also on the greatly improved communication between school and home, helping the many parents who are keen to support their children's learning. In addition to a termly curriculum briefing and weekly newsletters, 'There is', as parents explain, 'a parents' council, and staff always seem available to talk to parents.' Many of the staff with leadership responsibilities are still relatively new to their roles, although they are being helped to develop and have an impact of provision and standards within their focus subjects. Governors are very supportive of the school and are not shy about rigorously challenging the headteacher and other school leaders. Community cohesion has been promoted satisfactorily through the improved partnership with parents, through strengthened links with other schools and institutions, including through regular sporting links, and through fundraising activities for national and international charities and initiatives to improve the environment. Pupils enjoy the opportunities they have to learn about other beliefs and ways of life, although they are introduced more to different world cultures than to the diversity of cultures in modern Britain.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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| 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

| | |
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| 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 | 2 |

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

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|---|---|
| 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

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|--|---|
| 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 | 3 |

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

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|---|---|
| How good are 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 | 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 | 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? | 3 |

Leadership and management

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|--|-----|
| 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 | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation | 2 |
| 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 | 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 |

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

2 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Western Road Community Primary, Lewes BN7 1JB

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed our time at Western Road, and we could see that you do too. We agreed with what many of your parents told us, that Western Road is an improving school. It is providing you with a satisfactory education and one that is getting better as a result of the timely changes made by the headteacher, governors and staff team.

Despite sometimes good results in the Year 6 tests, you have not always in the past made as much progress as you should. Some of you have had gaps in your skills and knowledge because teachers have not always worked closely enough together to help you build on what you have learnt before. That is one of the many things that is changing for the better. You are now making reasonable progress in lessons and during your time in school, but we think you could be doing even better, and your headteacher and school leaders agree.

We believe you would be helped to make faster progress if you were always sure of what you should be learning in each lesson. Your teachers usually set out learning intentions at the start of each lesson. We have asked them to highlight these more throughout the lesson and to explain to you how you can show you have succeeded in your learning. We have also asked them to make sure that you all have individual targets that you can work towards achieving and that marking always shows you what you need to do to improve your work.

Staff take good care of you and Western Road is a friendly place to be. You get on well with each other and behaviour is good. You mostly listen well to your teachers, although we would like to see you listening more closely to each other's contributions in lessons. You are growing into confident young people, and you have lively imaginations. Your written work sometimes lets you down, however, because the excellent content is spoilt by careless spelling and punctuation and by untidy presentation. We have asked the school to push you more on getting your spellings and punctuation right. This is something with which you can help too, by making sure that you take greater care with these things and with the neat presentation of your work.

Our very best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully Selwyn Ward

Lead Inspector