

The Westerings Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115272
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326166
Inspection dates	28–29 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Michael Milton

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	Primary
School category	Foundation
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	330
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	Mr Lel Sweetman
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Bridger
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Sunny Road Hawkwell Hockley Essex SS5 4NZ
Telephone number	01702 205511
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is above average in size. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who need additional learning support is below average. However, the number of pupils who have statements of special educational needs is higher than usual. The specific needs of these pupils vary a great deal and include some that are complex. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. When they join the school, children have the skills and knowledge that are below those expected for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises of two Reception classes. The school has 12 awards, including the Eco-Schools Silver and the Advanced Healthy Schools awards. It recently received a Creative Partnerships Award that provides additional resources for three years.

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 satisfactory education for its pupils. It has some good features as well as some areas needing improvement. Parents are pleased with the school. As one wrote, 'I am normally pleased with the school, the environment and the teaching staff.'

Children join the Reception class with knowledge and skills below those expected for their ages with particular weaknesses in linking sounds to letters and in writing. They make good progress during the EYFS and achieve the expected standards by the time they start Year 1. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make satisfactory progress and, by the end of Year 6, reach average standards in English, mathematics and science. Although many lessons have good features, teaching and learning result in satisfactory achievement because there are some weaknesses in the quality of assessment and its use. Assessment is not always used to ensure that lessons are well matched to pupils' learning needs. The school has started to improve assessment in English and mathematics but these new systems do not yet consistently help pupils to achieve well. The best marking makes clear to pupils how they can improve, although pupils do not always respond to this. Pupils have targets for improvement in English and mathematics but these are sometimes not sufficiently precise to help them improve. Pupils who need extra support with their learning make good progress because of the well-planned provision and the strong contribution of the particularly well-trained teaching assistants.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils behave well and feel safe at school. Their attendance rate has risen because of the school's efforts, but attendance is still below average. Pupils' adoption of healthy lifestyles is excellent. Pupils have a good understanding of sustainability and they know how to keep themselves safe. All adults provide good levels of care and support. Systems for termly tracking the progress of individual pupils and groups are good, but their use is not yet having their full impact on raising standards.

A good curriculum, embracing a wide range of activities, contributes well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. There is good uptake of a wide range of clubs. As a parent wrote, 'The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent.' Good partnerships with local primary and secondary schools are used well to enrich pupils' learning. Pupils have contributed to the local community by helping with an environmental project at a local park and they lobbied the council for more recycling bins. Activities such as these, coupled with sound progress in developing their literacy and mathematics skills, ensures pupils' satisfactory preparation for their future economic well-being.

Leadership and management are effective in providing a good curriculum, promoting community cohesion and ensuring good care, support and guidance. These result in pupils' good personal development and well-being. However, leadership and management are not yet effective in ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress. Staff have a strong commitment to the school. The school knows its strengths and areas where it needs to improve. Despite this, its well-structured, detailed plans for improvement do not focus sufficiently on how changes to provision will help to raise standards. The governing body's contribution to strategic planning has helped bring about some improvements but has not resulted in good levels of achievement at Key Stage 2. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection, and has a satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make good progress during the Reception Year and, when they join Year 1, they have the skills and abilities that are in line with those expected of five-year-olds. Their personal, social and emotional development are strong and this is aided by good levels of care and the high priority given to children's safety and security. Children behave well and are keen to make the most of the opportunities for learning and play. They respect the adults and share well. They listen to each other and sustain their concentration with tasks.

Teaching and learning are good. Adults usually interact with children skilfully. This fosters children's good language and personal development, and their engagement with learning activities. Occasionally, the pace of learning slows in whole-class sessions and some children become fidgety. Assessment is based on careful observations of individual children and good records are kept. These records are used to plan the next steps of development for individual children.

The carefully planned curriculum provides well for learning through play, with a good balance between activities that adults direct and those that the children can choose for themselves. The outdoor play area is not used well to promote children's progress in communication, language and literacy. However, the imaginative role-play area engages the children fully in learning. Very good links with parents and the children's pre-school groups help the children to start learning as soon as they arrive in the school. The EYFS leader has an accurate knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision, and a good track record of addressing any weaknesses.

What the school should do to improve further

- Focus explicitly on raising standards in drawing up and implementing the school improvement plan.
- Use assessment information more effectively to plan pupils' next steps in learning in lessons and ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Improve pupils' rates of attendance by strengthening the use of incentives and rewards.

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

In 2007 and 2008, Year 2 pupils' standards were above national averages. The current Year 2 pupils are making satisfactory progress and are on track to reach average standards in reading, writing and mathematics next summer. These pupils started Year 1 with lower standards than usual. Pupils' standards in reading are higher than in writing. To redress this imbalance, teachers are now emphasising the need for pupils to improve their knowledge of letter sounds.

The targets set for pupils at the end of Year 6 are sufficiently challenging but teaching was not good enough for these to be met in 2008. Hence, the setting of these targets has not resulted in an established pattern of rising standards. The current Year 6 pupils are making satisfactory progress and are on track to achieve average standards in English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils make less progress in writing than in reading. During Key stage

2, pupils make inconsistent progress because teaching quality is inconsistent. For example, they make more progress with their scientific enquiry skills in Year 6 than in Year 5. More able pupils make satisfactory progress. Pupils who need additional learning support make good progress and achieve well. This is because teachers and support staff have an accurate understanding of their particular needs and use a good range of specialist support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They feel accepted and fully involved in the school's life, irrespective of their backgrounds. They support the school's values, including those for racial equality. Pupils report that any isolated incidents of bullying are resolved. Pupils' attendance rates have improved this year but are still below average. The Advanced Healthy Schools and FA Charter Mark awards recognise the important contribution the school makes to pupils' excellent healthy lifestyles. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility. For example, older pupils act as trained playleaders, school councillors and members of the 'Eco warriors'. The school's work that has resulted in four environment awards has considerably enhanced pupils' understanding of sustainability and their contribution to the local community. For example, all classes grow and sell fruit and vegetables.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Many lessons have good features but teaching does not consistently lead to good achievement because of inconsistencies in the quality and use of assessment. Good classroom management means that time is rarely wasted. The best lessons are well planned so that there are sequences of interesting activities and a brisk pace of learning. However in some lessons, for example in science, the level of challenge is insufficiently demanding. Teachers often use questions well to assess and extend pupils' learning but sometimes questions are repetitive and groups of pupils lose interest. Occasionally, teachers give clear guidance to pupils about how to improve their work from one National Curriculum level to the next. In many lessons, teaching assistants contribute to pupils' learning in all parts of the lesson, including the whole-class sessions. In a small minority of lessons, the pace of learning slows because the match of learning resources to pupils' needs is not good enough. Marking and target setting are not used consistently well in all classes. For example, at its most effective, target setting helps pupils to know clearly how to improve. However, not all pupils know their targets and some targets are too general. In some lessons, pupils successfully assess their own work and that of their peers, thus helping them to grasp how well they are doing. The assessment of pupils' scientific enquiry skills is not good enough to help improve standards.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A new system of curriculum planning is helping teachers to make links between subjects. The curriculum is enriched by themes such as sustainability and the global dimension, and by working with external professionals to enhance pupils' creativity. Partnerships with two secondary schools increase pupils' learning opportunities in several subjects, including mathematics and

physical education. Through partnerships with other local primary schools, pupils benefit from increased opportunities in music and mathematics. The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors and by visits, including a Year 6 residential trip.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for safeguarding pupils meet requirements and the school carries out all the necessary health and safety checks. Strategies to promote good attendance are clear but do not make enough use of incentives and rewards. The school has a very good understanding of the needs of vulnerable pupils, such as those who face significant emotional difficulties. Its provision for them is carefully planned, drawing on a wide range of support services and making effective use of particularly well-trained teaching assistants. As a result these pupils feel secure, are fully involved in the school's life and make good progress. Good links with parents include a half-termly 'open house' when parents can visit their children's classes after school and a termly year group newsletter about what is to be taught. The good system for tracking the progress of each pupil in reading, writing, mathematics and science is starting to help raise standards. Termly progress meetings use tracking information to review the progress of each pupil and decide upon follow-up action to address any underachievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are effective in providing pupils with good quality care and support and an enriched curriculum. However, the impact of leadership and management on achievement and standards is satisfactory. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses. It has used information from monitoring lessons to improve many aspects of teaching but has not secured consistently good use of assessment, marking and feedback to pupils. All at the school work hard to ensure that pupils are fully involved in the life and work of the school. Community cohesion is good, with particularly strong links being established with the local community and farther afield. Governors are well informed about the school and make regular visits to find things out for themselves. They ask challenging questions of the school.

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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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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?	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?	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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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**

30 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Westerings Primary School, Hockley, SS5 4NZ

The inspectors really enjoyed visiting your school and meeting your headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and many of you. Thank you for making us so welcome. It was good to talk to you in lessons, at lunch time and in meetings with members of the school council, as well as Year 6 pupils. It was also good to hear that you feel safe at school, often have fun in lessons and are glad that there are so many clubs. Your school has wonderful grounds and it was good to see how these are being used to help you learn.

You make satisfactory progress in learning English, mathematics and science. Lessons often have good features, including the work of the teaching assistants who know a lot about helping you to learn. Some of you have really good marking in your books that makes it clear whether or not you have achieved the lesson's learning objectives and tells you how you can improve. Also, some of you are clear about your own good targets to improve your work. We have asked the school to make sure that all marking and target setting are this good and that all lessons are well matched to what you need to learn.

The school is good at helping you develop as people. You behave well and are keen to learn. However, the attendance of pupils is below average and we have asked the school to do more to encourage good attendance. Everyone takes good care of you and makes learning enjoyable through the clubs and the interesting things you learn. You have good opportunities to work in the local community, including the links with other schools. The headteacher, deputy headteacher, the staff and governors work hard to improve the school. They have detailed plans that are helping the school to improve in many ways and we have asked them to make sure that these make improving your progress a clearer priority.

You can all help the school to improve by coming to school regularly. Also you can do better with your work by reading and acting on what teachers write in your books about how to improve your work.

We wish you every success in your future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Milton

Lead inspector