

Westlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124119
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	328058
Inspection date	22 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Melvyn Hemmings

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	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	139
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	Aileen Clark
Headteacher	Stephen Stirland
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Ostend Place Westlands Newcastle under Lyme ST5 2QY
Telephone number	01782 296130
Fax number	01782 296131

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors who investigated the overall effectiveness of the school and the following issues.

- The reasons for standards in writing being a weaker aspect of pupils' performance in English.
- If there is sufficient challenge for more able pupils.
- How successfully the progress of individual pupils is tracked and the information used to set targets for improvement.

Evidence was gathered from the school's self-evaluation form, assessment and tracking records, parental questionnaire responses, observations of the school at work, and discussions with staff, the chair of governors and pupils. Other aspects of the school were not investigated in detail, but the inspectors found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included, where appropriate, in the report.

Description of the school

The school is smaller than average and has Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in a Reception class. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average, as is the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds. There is privately managed before- and after-school provision on site.

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 overwhelming majority of parents support it and are rightly proud of the many stimulating learning experiences the school provides for their children. Two parental comments are typical of many: 'Throughout my child's time at Westlands, I have been impressed with the way she has been encouraged to become an independent and successful learner. She feels happy and safe at school' and 'I feel Westlands is a fantastic school that cares deeply for all its pupils. I would have no hesitation to recommend this school to anyone.'

Good leadership and management have been the main reason for the significant improvements made since the last inspection when the school was judged to be satisfactory. The headteacher's focused educational direction has resulted in raised standards by the end of Year 6, higher quality teaching and learning and a faster pace to improvements being put into place. All involved in the life of the school share his vision for school improvement and a strong team ethos is evident. Self-evaluation is accurate and enables priority areas for development to be identified and prioritised. This has led to the introduction of improved procedures for checking the progress of individual pupils so that challenging targets for improvement can be set. This has proved successful for most pupils, including the more able. However, the information collected is not always used by teachers to challenge effectively those average attaining pupils who are capable of attaining higher levels. Governors support the school well and are willing to hold it to account for its performance. Community cohesion is well promoted and as a result, the school is a harmonious setting in which to learn and links with the local community are good. Pupils are encouraged to explore and value the different traditions and beliefs of people to be found in a culturally diverse modern Britain. The school is seeking to extend this aspect of its provision further by fostering links with communities in other countries. The school's recent track record shows it has good capacity to make any necessary changes.

Children make good progress in the Reception class and this is maintained throughout the rest of the school. As a result, pupils attain above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. Pupils' attainment in writing is a weaker aspect of their performance in English. This is because they are not always challenged to present their ideas effectively in an organised and structured manner. Though the percentage of pupils attaining the expected levels is above the national average, comparatively few reach the higher levels. This is a result of activities which do not always challenge those average attaining pupils who are capable of reaching these higher levels. Pupils do particularly well in science because of the many opportunities they have to take part in structured, practical investigations. This shows marked improvement from the last inspection when progress and standards in science were judged to be areas of concern.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Behaviour is good and pupils are polite and respectful to others. They enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their above average attendance. They make a good contribution to school life by willingly taking on responsibility, such as being a member of the school council. Pupils also contribute well to the local community through raising funds for charity and taking part in a variety of local music events. Pupils are adopting healthy lifestyles well and talk enthusiastically about the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet. They are well aware of how to stay safe, both in and out of school. Pupils are prepared well for when they start secondary school.

Good teaching and learning are characterised by pupils' positive attitudes to their activities. They are keen to learn and enthusiastic in all they do. Relationships are excellent and lead to classrooms being very calm and friendly places in which to learn. Teachers provide interesting experiences that engage pupils and motivate them to do well. They manage lessons effectively to maintain pupils' concentration and ensure their pace of working is good. Opportunities though are sometimes missed in English to encourage pupils to plan their work so that they can present their ideas in a well structured way. Teaching assistants support all pupils well, especially those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This is an important factor in the good progress that these pupils make. A wide range of enrichment activities add further interest to the good curriculum. These include extra-curricular activities, such as choir, football and art, which are well attended. The good links with other providers, such as professional sports coaches, further extend pupils' skills. The programme for personal development includes the opportunity for pupils to take part in two residential experiences. These make a positive impact on pupils' personal and social skills by encouraging them to work collaboratively, take on responsibility and show initiative.

Parents and pupils are appreciative of the good care and support that the school provides. All staff are firmly committed to ensuring pupils' well-being whilst in school. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and pupils say they feel safe and secure in school. They say they know they can talk to a member of staff if they have any worries and concerns. The good links with outside agencies, such as the Speech and Language Therapy Service, ensure extra support is available for individual pupils when required.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Good provision enables children to make good progress and attain above average standards by the time they enter Year 1. This represents good achievement from their skill levels on starting school, which are as expected for children of their age. Children are eager to learn and show much enjoyment in their activities. They behave well and take turns, sharing fairly with others. Their social skills are well developed and they work well together in pairs and small groups and treat equipment and resources with respect. Adults plan activities that build well on children's own experiences and so engage and maintain their interest. The balance between teacher directed activities and those chosen by children themselves is generally good. However, opportunities are sometimes missed for children to initiate their own writing activities and carry these out independently of adults. This hinders their progress in writing, which is a weaker aspect of children's learning. Good quality care ensures that children's well-being is promoted well. Children feel happy and safe, trusting the adults who look after them. Good leadership has correctly identified the need to make better use of the outdoor area in order to more effectively promote children's learning throughout the day. Currently, its use does not fully support all the areas of learning provided for children. The arrangements for introducing children to the Reception class are good and help them to settle quickly into everyday routines. Good links with parents mean they are kept fully informed of the progress their children make.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in writing across the school, particularly by improving older pupils' ability to present their ideas in a more organised and structured manner.
- Use assessment information more rigorously to better challenge those average attaining pupils who are capable of reaching the higher levels.

- Use the outdoor area in the EYFS more effectively to promote children's learning throughout the day.

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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	2

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	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	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	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?	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 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	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

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

23 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westlands Primary School, Newcastle under Lyme, ST5 2QY

Thank you for the really friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and seeing the things you do. Yours is a good school. It helps you to make good progress and reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are above average by the end of Year 6.

What we found about your school.

- It is a very friendly place in which to work and play.
- Adults look after you well and make sure you are safe in and around school and on visits.
- You enjoy coming to school and your attendance is above average.
- You are leading healthy lifestyles and show a good awareness of how to stay safe.
- Your attitudes to lessons are positive and you are keen to learn.
- A lot of you join the many after-school clubs that help to make the curriculum even more interesting.
- You behave well and relationships in school are excellent.
- You make a good contribution to the school, such as being a member of the school council, and to the local community.
- Leaders of the school are working hard to make improvements and help you do even better.

What we have asked your school to do now.

- Help you to do better in writing by improving your skills in presenting ideas in a more organised and structured way.
- Help those of you who reach average levels and are capable of doing better by making better use of assessment information to set work that makes you think harder.
- Improve the use of the outdoor area for children in Reception to better support their learning.

You can help your school improve further by continuing to try your best in all you do. All of you are a credit to your school. All my best wishes for the future and I hope you carry on enjoying your work and being kind and considerate to others.

Melvyn Hemmings

Lead inspector