

West Leigh Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114780
Local Authority	Southend-On-Sea
Inspection number	338444
Inspection dates	3–4 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Eileen Chadwick

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Donald Fraser
Headteacher	Mary Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	5 March 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff, parents and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at its improvement plans, assessment records, pupils' work, curriculum plans, and safeguarding and welfare procedures.

The 112 questionnaires returned from parents and carers were also analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- children's attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage and their progress in Reception
- the evenness of pupils' progress in Key Stage 1, especially that of boys in writing
- the consistency of good and better teaching across the school
- the impact of leadership and management at all levels on raising achievement, especially through new initiatives to improve self-evaluation systems.

Information about the school

West Leigh is a large school. Most pupils are White British with a small number from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than that seen in most schools. These pupils mainly have speech, language or literacy difficulties. The school has gained a number of national awards including Healthy Schools and Activemark awards. The headteacher took up post in September 2008.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Pupils thrive both academically and personally in a welcoming, caring and very well-organised environment. Standards are high in reading and mathematics by the time pupils leave at the end of Year 2. Pupils do well because the development of basic skills is given high priority. They greatly enjoy school and are extremely well behaved because they feel exceptionally safe and are very well cared for. They have a very thorough understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. The very good leadership of the headteacher and the shared vision and commitment of the whole team to excellence and enjoyment are reasons why parents are delighted with the school. One parent echoed the views of the majority when saying, 'I am very pleased with the school, the headteacher and teachers are excellent at their jobs.'

Within the overall picture of good achievement, there are variations in pupils' progress in English. From starting points that are above those seen in most schools, children's good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage leads to well above average standards on entry to Year 1, including in literacy and numeracy. Pupils make consistently good progress in reading, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school. However, pupils' progress in writing is satisfactory in Key Stage 1 and, by Year 2, standards in writing are above average. In particular, far fewer reach higher levels in writing than do so in reading and mathematics because their work is not always challenging. Pupils develop their ability to write for a range of factual purposes but there are not enough opportunities for all pupils to grow their use of imaginative vocabulary and to write creatively. Inconsistencies in spelling, punctuation and handwriting for some pupils, especially boys, across the attainment range also prevent standards in writing rising more rapidly. The school is already working to improve pupils' writing through changes to the curriculum but it is too early to see a full impact on standards. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make generally good progress, although literacy tasks for these and for lower attaining pupils are occasionally too hard.

The headteacher is building on the school's strengths and, together with the strong support of other senior leaders, is harnessing staff's talents and has created thorough systems for checking pupils' progress across the school. Self-evaluation systems, recently improved, are now good and rigorous monitoring by senior leaders has led to teaching and learning that is mainly good and, occasionally, outstanding. However, on a few occasions the pace of pupils' learning slackens when they are not given clear enough direction during group work. The school has rightly identified the need to increase opportunities for middle leaders to observe lessons and monitor data so they can gain a whole-school picture and take a fuller part in raising attainment. Governors

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provide strong support and good levels of challenge. Good teamwork by all concerned has been a major contributory factor to recent improvements. With embedded ambition for further development, accurate self-evaluation which has produced the right priorities for improving pupils' achievement and better systems for checking how well the school is performing, the school has a good capacity to continue to move forward.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise standards in writing so they match those in reading and mathematics by
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their use of imaginative vocabulary and to write creatively
 - improving spelling, punctuation and handwriting by more rigorous teaching in these areas, especially for boys
 - setting consistently challenging work for more able pupils.
- Improve the consistency of good and better teaching by
 - ensuring literacy tasks are always matched to the needs of lower attaining pupils
 - always providing a clear direction for pupils during group work.
- Increase opportunities for middle managers to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning and pupils' assessments so they have a greater role in raising achievement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school because they feel very safe, lessons are well organised and excellent relationships provide a very positive framework for learning. Pupils are keen to learn, very articulate and their excellent behaviour helps to ensure lessons flow smoothly. In the lessons observed during the inspection, most pupils were seen to be making good progress.

The school has maintained consistently high standards in reading and mathematics for a number of years. Whilst standards for boys and girls have been significantly above average in writing they have not been so high as in reading and mathematics. In 2009, few boys, in particular, reached higher levels in writing. The achievement of minority ethnic pupils is similar to their peers.

Pupils learn to work independently from the minute they enter Reception. They are competent when using computers in different subjects. They are responsible and very mature in the way they share ideas and explore problems with their 'talk partners'. They play key parts in contributing to the work of the school and their community, for example through the school council, fundraising and charity work and the way they act as role models when being 'reading buddies' to younger pupils. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered well so that they approach learning and living with others in a spirit of enthusiasm. Along with demonstrating their responsibility within school, of special note is pupils' respect for other cultures, religions and lifestyles.

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Reflecting West Leigh's Healthy School and Activemark awards, pupils show their excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils eagerly take part in the rich range of physical activities, including weekly swimming lessons and are strong advocates of healthy eating. Pupils' extremely good attendance and good achievement in basic skills means they are well prepared for the future.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching in all age groups provides interesting and varied activities to engage and enthuse pupils. Consequently, pupils want to do well. Children in Reception are helped to settle quickly and teachers get to know their skills in all the areas of learning soon enough to begin moving them forward at an early age. Teachers manage pupils extremely well and encourage them to work hard and do their best. A good range of approaches is deployed to help pupils learn, for example through listening and watching as well as through solving problems. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 2, pupils thoroughly enjoyed applying their excellent numeracy skills when calculating answers to word problems. The teacher engaged pupils from the beginning by using good quality

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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resources, providing work well matched to pupils' previous skills and involving pupils of all abilities in problem-solving through focused questioning. Accurate assessment information helps teachers to plan activities that usually build well on pupils' previous learning. However, there are occasional instances when literacy tasks are too hard for lower attaining pupils and, during independent group work, pupils are sometimes unclear about what they are trying to achieve.

Teachers plan activities that cross subject boundaries and make learning interesting and relevant. The school is increasing creative learning opportunities and these are now good in art and design. Activities from art and design technology, as well as outside visits and visitors, provide practical starting points and bring academic learning alive. Some particularly good geography, literacy, art and design technology links were seen when pupils learned about London and designed and created 'London buses'. The curriculum is complemented by a good range of after-school clubs and excellent partnerships with other schools and agencies. An example of this is the project with the junior school for promoting continuity in writing experiences across the two schools. Planning for every year group includes learning opportunities for the year ahead in order to challenge the substantial proportion of more capable pupils. Teachers make very good use of all available space which, in some classrooms, is rather cramped.

The school works strenuously to make sure every pupil is valued. Extremely strong care, support and guidance contribute very effectively to the personal development and well-being of all pupils. The school has exceedingly good partnerships with outside specialists, for example for those with pronounced special educational needs, including disabilities, to ensure pupils' welfare and medical needs are well met. Excellent liaison with pre-schools and very close links with parents ensure that children settle and are well supported. Pupils find their individual targets helpful.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher's clarity of vision and commitment are fully recognised by staff and governors who share her passion for promoting excellence in all areas. Morale amongst staff is high and they have welcomed the increased support and help for improving their teaching. The leadership structure is well thought through and leaders at all levels are being empowered to play a full part in raising achievement. Middle leaders' roles are being developed and the school has identified that the next step is for them to observe

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colleagues' teaching and to evaluate assessment data across the school.

The new systems for tracking and evaluating pupils' progress provide a good focus for all staff and leaders to judge pupils' progress towards their demanding targets. Teachers are becoming more adept at evaluating the impact of their provision on pupils' progress through regular analysis of assessment information. Governors are well organised and, between them, have a good range of expertise. They are well informed and not afraid to ask challenging questions about standards and achievement.

There are good procedures for ensuring the safety of pupils and school leaders make certain that staff receive clear guidance to enable them to identify issues that might raise concerns about pupils' well-being. The school is active in tackling discrimination and promotes equality of opportunity well. The school successfully reaches out to the local and global communities and encourages pupils to understand and value people's differences, beliefs and lifestyles. The school is in the process of appropriately extending provision by creating links with different communities in the United Kingdom.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter a warm and nurturing environment when they begin school. They love coming to school because there are so many interesting things to do. The promotion of children's welfare and safety is outstanding and complements the excellent induction procedures. Staff are very caring and know each child very well and go the extra mile to ensure each child feels secure.

Children's attainment on entry varies but, overall, it exceeds that typically found for their

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age. They make good progress because of the good teaching they receive. By the time they begin Year 1, most have reached the expected levels and the majority exceed them, including in reading, writing and mathematics. They develop their independent learning and enquiry skills very well. There is a good balance for children to learn through focused sessions led by adults and purposeful play. Teachers create exciting settings to help children learn through role play, for example, 'Santa's workshop'. Role play areas are linked particularly well to literacy and provide good scope for children to develop their communication skills, including writing, as well as their imagination. The most capable children are quickly identified and given more challenging work. All adults are fully trained to develop children's learning through play but, very occasionally, they miss opportunities to intervene to extend children thinking during such times. Staff make really good use of the external area, although the small outside area for Reception children restricts outdoor learning. The school has made attempts to secure more space but has been unsuccessful in this. Planning, assessment and recording systems are good. The Early Years leader and staff check assessments carefully to ensure provision meets children's learning needs. They are, for example, increasing opportunities for higher level numeracy work to ensure more capable children's achievement is even across all aspects of mathematics.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The overwhelming majority of parents who returned the questionnaires were very pleased with the experiences the school provides for their children. They believe the school keeps their children very safe, and that their children enjoy their time at the school and are progressing well. However, a few parents expressed concern that they are not able to have a formal parents' meeting to discuss their children's progress until early in the spring term. Opportunities for these meetings are now being gradually enhanced for all year groups. Several parents also expressed concern about the small size of the school playground. The school manages this space very well and keeps a close watch on pupils' welfare and behaviour. Plans are being developed to allow the Reception children to go into the school as soon as they arrive in the morning in order to reduce congestion.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at West Leigh Infant School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 360 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	78	70	32	29	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	82	74	29	26	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	41	37	59	53	9	8	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	69	62	39	35	1	1	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	80	72	30	27	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	78	70	31	28	2	2	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	76	68	33	30	2	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	66	59	30	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	62	56	45	41	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	56	50	46	41	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	44	50	45	2	2	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	70	63	39	35	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	75	68	35	32	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



4 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Leigh Infant School, West Leigh SS9 2JB

Thank you so much for the friendly welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We really enjoyed finding out about how much you enjoy school and learning about the interesting things you do.

First, you need to know your school is good one where you make good progress. Here are some of the many things your school does well.

You reach high standards in reading and mathematics.

You help to make your school such a special place because you are helpful, work hard and behave extremely well.

You understand how important it is to keep fit and healthy and enjoy sport. You know you should not eat too many sweets and cakes.

You have good learning opportunities in ICT, art and other subjects.

You have some great opportunities for visits and visitors.

Your headteacher leads you all extremely well and all the staff and governors think very carefully about what is best for you.

Staff take very good care of you and keep you very safe.

This is what I am asking your school to do to improve.

In writing, help you to use your imagination and more of you to reach higher levels.

Help some of you to improve your spelling, punctuation and handwriting.

Make sure your work is never too hard and you are always sure about what to do during groupwork.

Help teachers who lead subjects to be more involved in checking up on how well you are learning.

You can help too by continuing to work hard and by taking particular care to write neatly and to check your spellings and punctuation.

I hope you will continue to enjoy school.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Chadwick

Lead inspector

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