

Westcourt Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118572
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	339247
Inspection dates	24–25 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	241
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Walker
Headteacher	Andrew Gould
Date of previous school inspection	25 March 2010
School address	Silver Road Gravesend DA12 4JG
Telephone number	01474 566411
Fax number	01474 535749
Email address	headofschool@westcourt.kent.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 13 lessons and 9 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors, local authority officers and other staff with leadership responsibilities. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school documentation including the school improvement plan, monitoring records, the school self-evaluation document, pupils' progress records and the safeguarding procedures. Questionnaires were received and analysed from 138 parents and carers.

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

- how well the school is accelerating progress to raise attainment for all pupils
- how well teaching and the curriculum challenge all learners to achieve well
- how effectively the work of middle managers is driving school improvement and raising attainment
- the impact of the federation on school improvement
- how effectively the school is improving attendance.

Information about the school

Westcourt is an average size primary school. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. Pupils' needs relate mainly to behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds with the largest other groups from other White, Indian or Black African backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from homes where English is not the first language is higher than average. The school makes provision for pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage in a Reception class and a Nursery class where children attend on a part-time basis. In September 2009 the school formed a soft federation with a local primary school whose headteacher is the executive headteacher of both schools. In addition, there is a head of school who was the deputy headteacher of the school with which Westcourt is federated. The school has a Healthy School award.

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?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

Westcourt is a satisfactory school. It provides good care, guidance and support. Pupils behave well. They feel safe because they know how to take care of themselves and that any incidents of inconsiderate behaviour will be dealt with effectively. They have a good understanding of how to keep fit and healthy as recognised by a Healthy School award.

A legacy of underachievement is beginning to be overturned. Attainment remains low, but senior leaders are raising expectations and, as a result, pupils are making satisfactory progress. Through rigorous and incisive monitoring and self-evaluation, in conjunction with the local authority, the new leadership quickly identified the strengths to build on within the school and the important areas for development. This work has been correctly focused on raising attainment and improving progress and learning. There has been a considerable amount of training, including sharing the effective practice within both schools, which has enabled staff to develop skills and have a much more accurate picture of how to move pupils' learning forward. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and behaviour is no longer a barrier to learning. Pupils are beginning to make more rapid progress. This is particularly notable in writing, which has been a whole-school focus. Teachers have developed their skills in assessing pupils' progress to enable them to have a clear view of the next steps for pupils' learning and plan lessons accordingly. Attendance remains below average; however, support has been targeted effectively to improve the attendance of individual pupils. All these factors indicate that given the rapid and secure improvement, the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory, although it varies across the school. Successful support from senior leaders has increased the proportion of good teaching. Nevertheless, there are inconsistencies across the school and too much is satisfactory where time is not always used well enough to maximise learning, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to make good progress and are unclear about what they should be learning. Having made very effective immediate improvements, leaders, including governors, have correctly identified that they need to have a strategic overview of the work of the school for the longer term to more carefully plan for its future.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- In order to raise attainment in English, mathematics and science, and narrow the gap between the national figures and the school's performance, ensure that teaching is consistently good across the school by:
 - pacing lessons well so that pupils have enough time for independent learning

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- making sure that tasks consistently effectively tap into the learning needs of all pupils and provide appropriate challenge to accelerate their progress
- making sure that all pupils know exactly what they are learning in lessons, know if they have been successful and what the next steps are to improve.
- Work with parents and other agencies to improve attendance to average levels.
- Ensure that leaders and governors have a strategic overview of the key areas of the school's work to include a clearer analysis of the achievement, participation and attendance of all groups.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Although attainment is low, pupils' achievement and progress are satisfactory. School data and pupils' current work show that many pupils are meeting the challenges of higher expectations set by the new leaders, by making better and often accelerated progress to catch up in their learning. School records indicate that many more pupils were working at levels appropriate for their age after one term under the new leadership team. One pupil voiced the opinion of many when he said, 'They make you work harder now which is good because we learn much more.' Pupils enjoy their lessons especially when they have opportunities to get involved in problem solving, investigative activities and in discussing their ideas together. For example, Year 6 pupils were especially enthusiastic to work together in role-play activities to help them explore the key elements for writing an eye-witness account and, in a mathematics lesson, they enjoyed solving problems using measuring. These aspects helped make learning more meaningful and relevant for pupils and, as a result, they made good progress and achieved well. Sometimes however, pupils lose interest when they have to listen to teachers for too long and this, as well as insufficient challenge in some lessons, tends to limit the progress they make. All groups, including pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose first language is not English, make similar progress to others because their needs are identified at an early stage and effective additional support is provided. Attendance is below average and too many pupils are persistently absent which means they miss out on important learning. Pupils enjoy the responsibilities they are given, such as peer mediators and playground friends, and say they would like to do more. The school council is proud of its developing work, for example in drawing up an anti-bullying code for the school. Pupils strive hard to promote 'The Westcourt Way' which underpins the inclusive and caring ethos and makes a positive contribution to their good moral and social awareness. Spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. Pupils are keen fundraisers for many charities and through this develop an understanding of people who are less fortunate than themselves.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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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Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

Adults work successfully to include more vulnerable pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are able to participate in learning and make satisfactory progress. Support is targeted well and there is close collaboration between the school, notably the pastoral support team, and external agencies to build relationships with pupils and their families and to improve attendance. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well. Introductions to lessons often include pupils in discussion, with opportunities to share and articulate their thinking with a 'talk partner'. This is often extended by some teachers' good questioning skills but sometimes at the expense of moving learning on, so pupils listen to teachers for too long before getting on with independent learning. Also in some lessons tasks are not providing the right level of support or sufficient challenge and sometimes pupils are not clear about what they are going to learn which means they do not progress as rapidly as they could. Marking sometimes provides pupils with useful pointers about how to improve, but this is not consistent across the school and pupils are not always clear about their targets for learning or how and when they have achieved them. The curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' personal skills especially their understanding of issues connected with their health and safety. Some meaningful links are made across subjects to enliven learning, but there is insufficient focus in curriculum planning for pupils to use their basic skills and skills as learners across a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy and appreciate the range of clubs, visitors to school and trips out which enrich the curriculum and enhance their learning experiences.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The federation is having a positive impact on the work of the school as the ambition and drive of the new senior leaders have enabled significant improvements to be made very rapidly. Middle managers are effectively developing their roles, accountability and confidence as they feel valued and encouraged to contribute to school improvement. Leaders and managers are clearly aware that the momentum needs to be sustained to raise attainment and further accelerate progress and develop a more strategic overview of the key areas of the school's work. Their track record to date shows that they are well placed to do this. Leaders promote equal opportunities and tackle discrimination satisfactorily. The needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met effectively as are those of pupils with English as an additional language. The school meets the statutory requirements for safeguarding and has clear, well-established policies and procedures that are well known by all staff. Parents confirm that the school takes good care of their children and that they feel safe. The school has satisfactory procedures to promote community cohesion and works well to engage parents and carers in the community. The headteacher and governors have identified that wider national and international links are to be developed.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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	
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes make steady progress from their starting points that are well below expectations for their ages. There are positive, trusting relationships with the team of adults and, as a result, children are happy, behave well, settle well into the routines of the day and are well cared for. Parents appreciate the support given for a smooth transition into school. Children understand the need to keep themselves safe and healthy. They enjoy the healthy snacks and look out for each other as observed when one child reminded another not to rock on the chair in case he fell. The children make a good contribution to the smooth running of the day by, for example, registering their names on arrival, taking turns to ring the bell at the end of playtime and tidying away their activities. Children have access to a recently improved safe and secure outdoor area that is successfully providing increased opportunities for children’s learning. However, adults do not always pick up on the opportunities presented to extend children’s thinking and learning through their play which sometimes limits their exploration, problem solving and independent learning skills. An increasing focus on listening and speaking skills is beginning to lead to improvements, although some still have difficulty in verbal communication skills. There is a good balance of adult-directed activities and those where children can make their own choices. Enjoyable activities are planned to address the gaps in children’s learning. When children move into Year 1 however, their attainment remains below the expected levels, particularly in communication, language and literacy and calculation.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of the parents and carers who returned the questionnaire agreed that they were happy with their children’s experience at school and that their children enjoy coming to school. Most of the concerns expressed were about how effectively the school deals with behaviour and whether the school takes account of their suggestions and concerns. The inspection found that behaviour is good and that the school manages

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any inappropriate behaviour well. Inspectors agree that although the school does ask parents and carers for their views through its own questionnaires, it could do more to inform parents and carers of the findings and any action that will be taken as a result. Parents would also like to be kept up to date with the developments of the federation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westcourt Primary 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 138 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 241 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	76	55	56	41	6	4	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	76	55	58	42	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	59	43	63	46	12	9	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	45	33	82	59	7	5	2	1
The teaching is good at this school	64	46	66	48	6	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	56	41	71	51	10	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	48	35	82	59	5	4	1	1
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)	46	33	74	54	7	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	45	33	80	58	7	5	2	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	46	33	77	56	10	7	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	28	75	54	17	12	3	2
The school is led and managed effectively	43	31	84	61	4	3	2	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	58	42	72	52	6	4	1	1

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.



26 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westcourt Primary School, Gravesend DA12 4JG

I am writing to thank you for being so friendly and polite when we visited your school. We agree with you and your parents that Westcourt is a caring and safe place to be where everyone looks after you well. Your school is satisfactory overall. This means that some things are good and some things need to be better. Well done to you all for working so hard to improve your writing. I know that some of you wrote that you were anxious about behaviour in school, but we were impressed with your good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Well done for understanding how to stay fit and healthy. We have asked everyone in your school to do the following important things.

- We want all your lessons to be as good as the best ones. To make sure this happens we have asked the teachers to give you enough time to work independently and to plan work that is just right for each of you. We also want you to be clear about exactly what it is you are learning, whether you are successful and what the next steps are to do even better.
- We want you to do better in your English, mathematics and science work by the time you leave school. To do this you need to work hard and make faster progress in your learning. We think you can do this because many of you are already starting to learn more quickly because teachers are expecting more of you. We want them to carry on with this and for all teachers to expect the very best from you.
- You cannot learn if you are not at school and too many of you do not attend regularly. We want you and the school to work very hard to make sure you come to school every day.
- We want all the people who lead and manage your school, including the governors, to keep a very close check on everything the school does so they can make clear plans for improving Westcourt even further.

Thank you again for being so helpful and interesting to talk to.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Coussins

Lead inspector

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