

Westfield First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117254
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	338978
Inspection dates	2-3 March 2010
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	182
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Bryant
Headteacher	Dolores Bennett
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The majority of time was spent observing learning, including visits to 17 lessons, during which nine teachers were seen. Meetings were held with pupils, staff and two governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at the school's improvement plan, assessment records, safeguarding documents and those relating to their health, safety and attendance, and 95 questionnaires returned by parents.

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

- the school's evidence that pupils make at least good progress from their starting points and that attainment is high
- the extent to which the school's view that pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress is well-founded
- the extent to which cross-curricular writing and provision, and pupils' awareness of their next steps in mathematics have improved
- how well the outcomes of monitoring are used to improve teaching and learning and to give an accurate view of the school's performance.

Information about the school

Most pupils at this smaller than average first school are from White British backgrounds and few are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below the national average, although this varies from year to year. An average proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage join the school in the Nursery. Amongst its national awards, the school has Healthy School and Eco-school silver status. The school hosts the Home from Home wrap-around care provision and Paws Nursery lunch-club and afternoon care, which are privately managed, and the Dacorum Opportunity Class which is managed by the local authority. All of these are inspected separately. The school also hosts an advisory and training outreach service for specific learning difficulties. The headteacher joined the school in April 2008 and the deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2009.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Westfield First School provides an outstanding education for its pupils. A potent combination of excellent teaching and leadership, together with pupils' very positive attitudes and eagerness to learn, is the key to the school's success. Parents are very supportive of the school's work, one describing it as 'a fantastic school where both my children are incredibly happy' while another added, 'We are very pleased with our children's progress at Westfield and always feel proud that they are pupils there.' Pupils' enjoyment of school is reflected in attendance rates that are consistently high.

Pupils make excellent progress in their all-round development and achieve exceptionally well so that by the end of Year 4, standards are very high. Under the determined and clear-sighted leadership of the headteacher, staff have high expectations of themselves and others. They evaluate their work rigorously, keep a very close check on pupils' learning and have a detailed knowledge of how individuals and groups of pupils are doing. This means they can provide the right amount of challenge or support in lessons, and can target additional help to those who need it. Relationships are extremely positive throughout the school and the behaviour of most pupils is exemplary. Consequently, lessons are invariably calm, supportive and well organised, which underpins the high quality learning that takes place.

The pursuit of academic excellence in key subjects is not at the expense of pupils' personal development. They benefit from a broad and exciting range of activities in other subjects and a similarly strong emphasis is placed on helping pupils to develop essential personal skills. As a result, pupils have a mature understanding of how to stay safe and healthy, and a very clear grasp of right and wrong. They make an excellent contribution to the school by taking on extra responsibilities, such as membership of the school council or acting as 'buddies', and have many regular opportunities to contribute to the local and wider community. Pupils are very supportive of each other so that, for example, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included in school life, and pupils of all backgrounds get on well. However, their knowledge of cultures other than their own is patchy.

Governors and senior leaders monitor the school's work thoroughly. A very close check is kept on the quality of lessons and they analyse data from tests and other assessments robustly. As a result, the school knows itself well and there is no complacency. Areas for improvement are identified and tackled rigorously. For example, work to improve provision in mathematics has successfully raised

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standards, improved teaching and accelerated pupils' progress and enjoyment. Similarly, better opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects have contributed to higher standards. The headteacher, staff and governors are determined that high standards should be maintained and the school should improve even further. Their track record shows the school is exceptionally well placed to do so.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' awareness of cultures other than their own.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Most pupils reach the levels expected of pupils in Year 4 and a good proportion, often in the region of a half, reach the standard expected of pupils in Year 6. These very high standards are also reflected in the school's performance in the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 which, in most years, are significantly above average. Results dipped in 2008, largely due to a high turnover of pupils in that year group. These pupils have made very brisk progress since then and are on track to reach high standards by the time they leave.

Pupils' attainment when they first start school covers a wide range, but most arrive with skills and knowledge typical of their age. By the time they leave, attainment is high because teachers consistently tailor the work very successfully to meet pupils' specific needs and, as a result, pupils of all abilities, and the few from homes whose first language is not English, do very well. The most able pupils rise to the high levels of challenge presented to them. For example, in an excellent lesson in Year 2, while pupils learned to measure accurately in centimetres, one pupil successfully extended his skills by using the computer to measure in millimetres. Teachers' precision in meeting pupils' needs is a considerable factor behind their excellent learning. In another outstanding lesson in Year 3, lower ability pupils received excellent support and the activity was modified systematically so that they were able to make rapid progress in their understanding of shadows. Pupils' high levels of attainment and their excellent progress means they are exceptionally well prepared for the future and the next stage in their education.

Pupils make good progress in their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. They have outstanding moral and social awareness, learn about a range of religions and understand the need for tolerance, but their knowledge of the range of cultures found locally and beyond is limited. A few pupils occasionally find it difficult to behave, but they are very well managed by staff so there is no disruption to their learning or that of others. Pupils report, and their parents agree, that they feel very safe in school and this adds to their high levels of enjoyment and achievement.

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These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
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	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is consistently good and often outstanding. Teachers who are at an early stage in their careers are very well supported and make a good contribution to the quality of provision. Lessons are briskly paced and challenging, yet supportive. Teachers are skilled at posing open-ended, challenging questions that reveal pupils' understanding and encourage them to think deeply. Very capable teaching assistants contribute considerably to pupils' learning. In particular, their thoughtful interventions enable pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to keep pace with the lesson and make rapid progress. Staff ensure that pupils understand what they are expected to learn and come back to this regularly, during and at the end of the lesson. Regular feedback, including high quality marking, ensures that pupils are keenly aware of how well they are doing and how they might improve. This is an improvement since the last inspection, particularly in mathematics.

The excellent curriculum makes a considerable contribution to pupils' academic and personal development. Strong links are made between subjects to make the work interesting and relevant and there are very good opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills to assist their learning in other subjects. Good use is made of computers and other technology, and plans are well in hand to improve this provision further. Pupils' enjoyment is enhanced by a very good range of visits, including residential experiences, visitors and clubs outside of lessons. The school places a strong emphasis on providing high quality care for pupils. Many parents comment on the school's very supportive ethos. Pupils are very well known to staff, including those

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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who work in the office, which means they can keep a close eye on their well-being. Systems to protect potentially vulnerable pupils are very robust. Excellent support is given to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, so that they are able to make rapid progress towards their targets. Very strong links with outside agencies, including the on-site support base for children with specific learning difficulties, underpin this process. Systems to assess potential risk and secure health and safety are meticulous.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

There is a strong sense of teamwork, shared ambition and commitment to securing the very best for pupils. Steps to tackle weaknesses from the last inspection have very successfully raised standards of attainment in mathematics and writing. Regular monitoring by senior staff and governors helps to identify what needs to improve. Progress towards improving these issues is monitored doggedly and the outcomes of monitoring and pupils' assessments are used to hold staff to account. Governors evaluate the impact of their own work thoroughly; they have excellent systems for checking on the school's effectiveness and for challenging leaders. Every step is taken to check on the suitability of adults to work with children and to ensure that all pupils share the same opportunities whatever their backgrounds or abilities. These outstanding systems have a significant impact on pupils' enjoyment, well-being and academic progress.

The school has established very good links with parents, most of whom feel that their views are taken into account. Links with local schools are very strong; they contribute well to extending the range of opportunities available to pupils and to helping staff develop their expertise. The school also plays a strong lead in supporting staff development in other schools. Leaders have evaluated the school's impact on community cohesion and have well devised plans for extending its influence. They have a good understanding of how the school contributes to the local community and are exploring avenues further afield, including developing links with a school in Australia.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	1
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	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy their time very much in the lively and supportive Nursery and Reception classes and make excellent progress. Relationships are very positive and children feel very safe in the secure environment. By the time they enter Year 1, most children reach, and many exceed, the goals expected of them. The very knowledgeable and well-qualified staff provide an exciting range of activities that promote children's all-round development extremely well. Thorough planning provides a very good balance of activities led by adults and those selected by children. A high priority is placed on building on children's interests and responding to situations as they arise. Children in the Nursery, for example, took great delight in exploring how to break up frozen sand after a very cold night. Children's language is promoted very well. Staff question thoughtfully to encourage extended sentences and the development of their ideas. Children take their extra responsibilities, such as acting as register monitors, very seriously. Their progress accelerates as they move through the Reception year. In an excellent session, for example, children made rapid gains in their understanding of how to measure the length of each others' bodies. The children had a mature understanding of what they were expecting to learn. In another very successful session, the children were engrossed by the teacher's imaginative presentation of how to make a papier-mâché octopus. They were able to describe in some detail, the changes taking place when granules and water were mixed to make paste, and soon used terms such as '3D' with great confidence. This thirst for learning is a regular feature in both Nursery and Reception classes. The setting is very well led and managed. Staff take great care of the children and ensure that welfare requirements are met.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents who responded to the questionnaire are very supportive of the school. All of those who expressed an opinion state that their children enjoy school and are kept safe. A few parents indicate that they do not receive enough information about their children's progress. Inspectors found that the school provides a good range of information to keep parents informed and that staff are readily available outside of the formal opportunities for consultation. A similarly small minority felt that their views are not taken sufficiently into account. Again, inspectors found that the school has established excellent links with parents, and consults regularly with them to seek their opinions, a view shared by most parents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westfield First 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 95 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 182 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	60	63	34	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	46	48	47	49	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	24	25	58	61	12	13	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	41	43	42	44	9	9	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	41	43	48	51	2	2	1	1
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	42	44	51	54	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	47	49	47	49	1	1	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)	27	29	50	54	4	4	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	31	33	58	62	4	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	45	45	48	6	6	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	32	34	43	46	9	10	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	40	43	44	47	5	5	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	47	50	43	46	2	2	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 all 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 pupils' 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 March 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westfield First School, Berkhamsted, HP4 3PJ

Thank you for being so friendly and helpful when we visited your school. We were pleased to be able to visit your classrooms to see you work. A special thank you goes to those who met with us to give us your views. You are right to be proud of your school and you gave us lots of helpful information.

Many of you and your parents told us how pleased you are with your school and how happy and safe you feel. We agree. Your school is outstanding and you make excellent progress in everything you do. Your work is of a very high standard. There are many reasons for this. Your headteacher and staff work very hard to make lessons interesting and challenging. Teachers and teaching assistants give plenty of help to those who need it, and also make sure that there is harder work for those who find learning easy. This means that you are all given a chance to do your best. Another reason why you do well, and just as important, is that you work very hard, try your best and behave yourself very well. We were very pleased to see how you listen carefully when the adults explain things and we could see for ourselves how much you enjoy school. Well done, and please keep this up because it is very important.

Even though your school is outstanding, your headteacher and the other adults are keen for it to be even better. We have asked them to make sure that you learn about the different cultures found in your local area, elsewhere in Britain and beyond. We know how thoughtful you are about others, so I am sure you will want to help by working just as hard at this as you do your other work. We wish you good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Keith Williams
Lead inspector

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