

Westende Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	109899
Local authority	Wokingham
Inspection number	378008
Inspection dates	30–31 January 2012
Lead inspector	Rob Crompton

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jane Ainslie
Headteacher	Dominic Cook
Date of previous school inspection	29–30 June 2009
School address	Seaford Road
Wokingham	RG40 2EJ
Telephone number	0118 9786682
Fax number	0118 9795567
Email address	westendehad@gmail.com

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rob Crompton

Additional inspector

Clementina Ogunsanwo

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors visited 22 lessons or part-lessons and observed 11 teachers and 12 teaching assistants. The inspectors held meetings with members of the governing body and staff, and talked with pupils. The inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection and observed the school's work. They looked at the school's self-evaluation, improvement plans, policies, assessment and tracking systems, safeguarding procedures and pupils' work. The inspectors examined questionnaires from 129 parents and carers, and 32 members of staff.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized school in Wokingham. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. Around 10% are from minority ethnic backgrounds with none at an early stage of speaking English as an additional language. The school includes specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This is known as the Acorns Resource Centre, and it supports pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. At the time of the inspection, 11 pupils were based in the centre and this accounts for the proportion of pupils in the school with a statement of special educational needs being higher than average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in the mainstream classes is below average. Most of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties. Pupils are split into ability sets for English and mathematics in both Year 5 and Year 6, and for mathematics from Years 3 to 6. The headteacher took up his post in September 2011 and, at the time of the inspection, the deputy headteacher was on maternity leave. A member of staff was fulfilling this role on a temporary basis. The school meets the government's floor standard.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	1
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a good school where pupils achieve well. This is due to consistently effective teaching underpinned by a stimulating curriculum that engages pupils. Relationships are excellent across the school. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and sense of purpose. Pupils have very mature attitudes, behave extremely well and thoroughly enjoy learning. Parents and carers hold the school in high regard. The overwhelming majority say that their children are happy, safe and well cared for. All those returning the questionnaire said they would be happy to recommend the school to other parents and carers.
- Pupils make good progress in English, mathematics, science, and information and communication technology (ICT). They are adept in using the literacy, numeracy and computer skills they acquire in these subjects when working across the curriculum. Pupils tend to do better in reading and mathematics than in writing. This is being tackled well but there remains a wider than usual gap between pupils' attainment in reading and that in writing.
- Pupils' progress is tracked carefully to identify any glitches or trends in the performance of individuals and different groups. Teachers use assessment records to plan work which builds on pupils' prior learning and provides an appropriate level of challenge. Teachers' lively approach and brisk pace help to sustain pupils' attention and contribute to their learning and enjoyment.
- The Acorns Centre provides good support for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder within a warm, calm and secure environment. Staff are generally successful in equipping pupils with the skills to interact with other children and adults. Working alongside their peers in lessons provides pupils with ample opportunities to apply these skills in a non-threatening environment. Their classmates offer support when they can and generally show tolerance and mature attitudes towards their needs.
- The headteacher plays a significant role in sustaining improvement and has

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already had a positive impact, particularly in strengthening teaching and promoting the home/school partnership. Self-evaluation procedures are effective in identifying areas for improvement. One outcome of this self-review is the aim to develop stronger links with the neighbouring infant school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing, particularly for the more-able pupils, in order to narrow the gap with their performance in reading by:
 - encouraging pupils to read more widely to stimulate their ideas for writing
 - developing the current emphasis on writing across the curriculum by providing pupils with even more opportunities to write in different styles for different purposes.

- Develop a more detailed picture of pupils' attainment on entry so that teachers can plan immediately to meet their varying needs when they arrive.

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Main report

Achievement of pupils

A concerted effort to accelerate pupils' progress in writing is paying dividends, although narrowing the attainment gap for more-able pupils between reading and writing, rightly, remains a school priority. Pupils make good progress in science and in ICT, reaching standards above the expected levels. Pupils who find difficulty in articulating their thoughts or speaking clearly make good progress which means most grow in confidence as they move through the school. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders also progress well due to skilled, sensitive support. They are increasingly able to sustain concentration and work alongside their peers for at least some periods during the school day. As they start in Year 3, most pupils read fluently and expressively. After a few pages of a novel, one pupil remarked, 'I'm just thinking that it might be an adventure story... there's a problem... and it's building up'. Those pupils who are less confident make rapid progress due to systematic teaching and use their increasing knowledge of sounds and letters (phonics) to read unfamiliar words. By the end of Year 6, reading levels are high. About three quarters of the current cohort are on course to reach above-average levels in reading, but in writing this proportion is lower, at 40%. Pupils are well versed in the criteria used to assess writing, taking care to include such things as similes and metaphors in their written work. While this helps them to create technically accurate narratives, descriptions and accounts, some pupils focus a little too much on these aspects rather than on engaging the reader. The best writing reflects the literacy devices that pupils come across in their own reading. For example, one started his adventure story with: 'Have you ever wanted to explore an unknown island? Well, if you follow these three easy steps you will become an intrepid explorer in no time.' Another wrote, 'Darkness engulfed her as the moon slipped behind a cloud'.

High standards in mathematics were evident during lessons in Year 6 and from pupils' workbooks. Pupils in the highest set addressed a complex problem systematically, some producing complex algebraic solutions. Around two thirds of pupils are working above the expected levels.

Pupils develop a very good degree of confidence when using their key skills across the curriculum. For example, when investigating the insulation properties of different materials in science, pupils in Year 4 had used temperature sensors attached to a computer to generate and interpret continuous variable graphs.

Quality of teaching

Teachers interpret the curriculum imaginatively. They are skilled in engaging and motivating pupils to rise to the high expectations they set. Parents and carers returning the questionnaires were unanimous in their view that their children are well taught. There were many positive comments, including, 'My daughter is being

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challenged and extended in lessons' and 'The patience and time given by the teachers and support staff are excellent'.

Teachers successfully encourage pupils' independence, at the same time ensuring that they build on their prior learning. They organise and manage daily reading sessions very well, supporting pupils at different stages with the help of well-briefed and effective teaching assistants. Classrooms abound with useful prompts for improving writing, including, for example, displays of synonyms of 'said' and collections of adverbial phrases. Sometimes, such technical aspects of writing are overemphasised, which means pupils, particularly those who are extremely confident readers, focus on how their work will be assessed rather than on crafting their writing in order to engage their audience.

Teachers use a variety of questioning strategies to keep pupils on their toes and provide regular opportunities for them, including those with speech and language difficulties, to hone their communication skills. Mathematics lessons often start with quick-fire questions, which help pupils to develop instant recall of number bonds and tables when tackling complex mathematical problems.

Setting by ability for English and mathematics is very effective in Years 5 and 6, enabling teachers to pitch work appropriately. In these and the other year groups, when the whole class is working together, pupils are often grouped and set tasks according to their needs. This generally works very well, especially when teaching assistants are involved from the outset. Occasionally, when lesson introductions are overlong, their skills are not used fully.

Teachers' skill in generating enthusiasm for learning and promoting their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development was evident in a wide range of subjects. Pupils in Year 4 responded eagerly to an 'email from an explorer' who needed guidance in how to filter muddy water. They cooperated extremely well as they used sieves and various filters to solve the problem. Replying to an enquiry from 'Planet Zorg' about the earth's climate, one Year 5 pupil wrote: 'Scientifically the Earth rotates around the Sun. This causes the Sun to look like it's moving when it's not.' Year 6 pupils were very keen to demonstrate how they used a CAD (computer-aided design) program to create three-dimensional house plans, skilfully manipulating the screen images to look at their designs from different viewpoints.

Pupils benefit from precise feedback on how they can improve. Teachers do this skilfully as lessons proceed and through their marking. Furthermore, pupils frequently assess their own work and that of their classmates using clear criteria. They are often involved in discussing and agreeing these with the teacher and this encourages mature attitudes to learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have exceptionally positive attitudes to learning. This is evident from the high attendance rates and the calm and purposeful atmosphere that pervades the school.

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Pupils are polite and courteous to one another and there is a high level of mutual respect between pupils and adults. Pupils are sensitive to the needs of their peers, including those who need additional support. For example, they show a good degree of understanding and tolerance to those pupils who find difficulty in making relationships and conforming to social conventions. Staff manage behaviour extremely well, employing agreed strategies consistently so pupils know the boundaries.

Pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after, and their parents and carers agree. The building is fully secure and pupils are supervised closely at all times. They have an extremely keen awareness of how to avoid potential hazards, including those associated with electronic communication. They are aware that bullying can take different forms but report that any kind of bullying is extremely rare and they are confident that it would be dealt with quickly if it did occur. Pupils feel that the peer mediation system works very well in helping to resolve minor squabbles and are proud to take part in it. Parents and carers are extremely positive about behaviour and the absence of bullying. Typical of their comments was, 'We have no experience of bullying but would have full trust in the school in dealing with any incidents'.

Leadership and management

Under the leadership of the headteacher, the monitoring of teaching has been refined and teachers have risen to the challenge of evaluating their own effectiveness against demanding criteria. All leaders provide strong role models in their own teaching and are quick to identify good practice. They provide useful advice to colleagues and organise additional training which helps staff to hone their skills. Recognising that many teachers have the skills and enthusiasm to take on leadership roles, the school is, rightly, reviewing the management structure to explore how these responsibilities might be further distributed. Useful links with the nearby infant school have been established. However, the school acknowledges that its links with the infant school are not as well developed as they could be to help Year 3 teachers gain insights into pupils' starting points on transfer.

The curriculum is good. The flexible, creative approach engages pupils very well. This is evident from pupils' enthusiasm in lessons and from the many positive comments of parents and carers. The two curriculum leaders monitor planning and outcomes to help ensure that pupils' skills progress within enjoyable purposeful contexts. The curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. This was exemplified during a Year 4 religious education lesson. Pupils considered the moral obligation of everyone to look after the environment and whether the Ten Commandments and the mores of other religions were explicit about this.

Opportunities for pupils to practise, consolidate and extend their basic skills across the curriculum are good. The school is reviewing the way writing is taught, encouraging a more flexible approach. A focus on promoting links between reading and writing is underway, although not fully established.

Across the school, all staff share a determined commitment to equal opportunities and

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ensuring all pupils do as well as they can. Safeguarding procedures are very well established and implemented very effectively. Self-evaluation is accurate with members of the governing body making an active contribution. Individual members are assigned to subjects and year groups, and visit the school regularly. This provides a useful source of first-hand information and contributes well to the well-founded strategic planning. The school's track record, including raising levels of attainment, together with this well-established process of self-review, indicates a good capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



1 February 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westende Junior School, Wokingham, RG40 2EJ

Thank you for making my colleague and me so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you about your work and seeing how well you were getting on in lessons. We agree with you that Westende is a good school and we could see why your parents and carers would recommend the school to others.

We discovered that the school has many strengths. Perhaps the one that will interest you most is our judgement about the teaching. Almost all the lessons we observed were really good and some were outstanding. Your teachers are very skilled in finding imaginative ways to capture your interest and, for your part, you respond very well to the challenging tasks they set. It was good to see you assessing your own work and that of your classmates. You have a really good idea of what makes good writing and try to include the 'VCOP' (vocabulary, connectives, openers and punctuation) criteria. We felt that, because most of you are really good readers, you might also try to use some of the ways that authors use to engage their readers. We know some of you are already adopting a 'magpie' approach! We focused on writing because this is weaker than reading and mathematics, and we have set the school a target for improvement. That said, we saw some great work in mathematics, science and ICT.

We were most impressed by your excellent behaviour and positive attitudes, and we saw that the adults ensure you are safe and well cared for. Your new headteacher has made a great start and has some good ideas to make the school even better. One of these is to make stronger links with Wescott Infants, where most of you begin, so teachers can get to know children before they move into Year 3. We think this will help new children to make the best start possible.

Well, if you have read this to the end, perhaps you had better check whether I have used any 'VCOP' strategies!

We wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely

Rob Crompton
Lead inspector

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