

Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115110
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357699
Inspection dates	17–18 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Cheryl Thompson

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	76
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kathy King
Headteacher	Caroline Shingleton
Date of previous school inspection	3 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors. Eight lessons were observed. The work of teaching assistants supporting small groups of pupils and individuals was also observed. Meetings were held with staff, governors and groups of pupils. The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at school self-evaluation documents, data on pupils' progress, external monitoring reports and development planning. A wide range of documents relating to safeguarding procedures were scrutinised. Responses from 38 parent and carers' questionnaires were analysed as well as those from pupils and staff.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- Why do pupils do better in English than mathematics?
- What is the impact of the school's provision for its gifted and talented pupils?
- How well does the school work with the high proportion of pupils with learning and behavioural needs?
- Do teachers adjust their teaching styles to cater for the high number of boys in some classes?

Information about the school

This small school serves pupils from the village and three nearby hamlets. Early Years Foundation Stage children are taught in the Early Years class. There are three other mixed-age classes. Almost all pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. Although the proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average, several of these have significant educational or medical difficulties.

The school has almost twice as many boys than girls on roll. A slightly higher than usual number of pupils join or leave the school during their primary school years.

The school holds the Activemark and National Healthy School status.

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

This is a good school. The headteacher provides good leadership for an effective staff. There is no complacency and efforts to bring about continuous improvement, based on accurate self-evaluation, pervade the school's work. The capacity for sustained improvement is good.

The children in the Early Years class make a good start, particularly in their understanding of letters and sounds. By the end of Year 6 attainment is above average although attainment in English is a little higher than that in mathematics. Progress in mathematics is not quite as rapid as it is in English because the information the teachers collect about each pupil's progress is not used as effectively to plan lessons, as it is in English. Pupils are enthusiastic because learning is motivating and enjoyable. Their enthusiasm for learning contributes strongly to the good progress they make. They are well prepared for their next stage of education not only academically but in their personal development. Behaviour is good and excellent in assemblies and in the Year 5 and 6 class. These pupils are good ambassadors for their school. All pupils get on well together and make an outstanding contribution to their own and the local community. They have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy. Their understanding that some pupils have difficulty managing their behaviour is very mature. Attendance is high.

Teaching is good. Some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. This was typified by high expectations of pupils', particularly in English. On occasions, though, especially in mathematics, lesson introductions are over-long, leaving too little time for pupils to practise and consolidate new skills. Teaching assistants are not always deployed effectively, especially in introductions to mathematics lessons to ensure that pupils of differing abilities have opportunities to practise something they are unsure of or for the more-able pupils to try challenging tasks. In contrast, during group working time, teaching assistants are deployed exceptionally well and ensure pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, work at a good rate.

The range of high quality work displayed around the school and pupils' topic books show that the curriculum is planned well and has a very positive impact on pupils' enjoyment of learning. Teachers provide good opportunities for practical work which boys particularly enjoy. Good partnership arrangements have a beneficial impact on the range of sports provided as well as opportunities for continuing professional development for staff and for gifted and talented pupils to work with pupils from other schools. Teachers and teaching assistants organise a good range of extra-curricular activities.

The governing body is very involved in the life and work of the school but not all governors' skills in analysing data about pupils' progress are developed enough so they can hold the school to account for its performance from an informed position.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate progress in mathematics, so that attainment is as high as in English by 2012, by:
 - making more effective use of assessment to inform daily planning
 - deploying teaching assistants more effectively to ensure support and challenge for pupils of all abilities
- Improve the governing body's understanding of national and school data about pupils' progress so they are in a better position to challenge the school leadership.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start in the Early Years Class with knowledge and skills which are broadly similar to those expected for their age, although this varies considerably from year to year. Pupils build very effectively on their good start. This was very well illustrated in an outstanding literacy lesson, where Years 3 and 4 pupils learned a great deal from discussions and research about Lapland. High levels of discussion in the lesson showed that pupils had a good level of interest in, and respect for, cultures other than their own. Writing standards are above average because pupils are given opportunities to write extensively about topics which hold their interest. They write confidently and at a very good pace because they have good spelling skills. Year 4 pupils' writing demonstrates good use of vocabulary and very good sense of audience. In a mathematics lesson observed, the introduction to the lesson did not fully meet the needs of pupils' differing abilities. More-able pupils were not challenged sufficiently and pupils who found the pace a little too fast did not have enough time to consolidate their skills. In contrast, though, when working in groups supported by proficient teaching assistants, all pupils made good progress.

Attainment in information and communication technology is above that expected for pupils' age. Standards in art are high and pupils talk at length about how they have approached their work, for example, they can discuss how they think Van Gogh completed his 'Starry Night' painting and how they have tried to emulate his technique.

Pupils who have joined the school part-way through their primary schooling make exceptional progress, many in a very short time. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress like their peers. The more able, or pupils who are talented or gifted in a particular area, also make good progress because teachers prepare challenging work for them. Pupils who are identified as gifted or talented make good progress in developing their particular skills because of good opportunities to join pupils from other schools to take part in specific activities, for example, multi-skills sports competitions.

Pupils' personal development is a continued strength of the school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils say they like school and demonstrate this with their high attendance level. As one pupil said, 'Our lessons are enjoyable and trips are great.' Pupils contribute a great deal to the caring ethos of the school and take pride in being buddies to the youngest children, playground buddies, class monitors and school councillors. They also take responsibility for running a tuck shop. The very well organised school council consults regularly with all pupils via class councils and their suggestion box. They organise fundraising activities for several national charities as well as for their own

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school and local causes such as Wethersfield Pavilion. Pupils have a good understanding of their personal targets and what they have to do to improve further. They also have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe, fit and healthy.

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	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	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	2

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching quality ranges from satisfactory to outstanding with more that is good or outstanding than satisfactory. In particularly effective English lessons, assessment is used precisely to set a high level of challenge for pupils in the activities they undertake. Support and encouragement are provided and adults' high expectations for pupils to persevere and 'have a go' at a task are successful strategies. Consequently, pupils develop very good work habits and positive attitudes to learning which also support their preparation for the future. The school benefits from a good number of proficient teaching assistants. The good working relationships between teachers and their teaching assistants is a significant strength. Teaching assistants are clear about what is expected of them and provide particularly good support to individuals who have a high level of need to help them cope in class. The curriculum provides a good balance of relevant and interesting lessons which are further enriched by a good range of visits such as those to Walton-on-the-Naze and a residential visit, which contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning. Sports partnerships have a significant impact on pupils' good levels of sporting skills and their willing participation and success in a range of competitive sports. Partnerships with other schools

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are developing well and are beginning to make a positive impact on areas such as the professional development of staff.

A key strength of the school is the strong pastoral care for each child. Partnerships with outside agencies, such as with local authority specialist teachers, have a strong impact on the good provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The good care for pupils is exemplified in the way that the governing body employ a home/school liaison worker and all adults work together extremely well to ensure that all pupils, whatever their difficulties or disabilities and talents, are helped to take full advantage of all the opportunities the school has to offer. The result of this caring and supportive ethos is that pupils are developing into considerate, independent and thoughtful young people who have a mature sense of their place in society.

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	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher provides good leadership for a staff who demonstrate a shared sense of responsibility and commitment. The school sets challenging targets for pupils to attain based on good systems of assessment. All staff and governors contribute to formulating the vision for the school and review this annually. Staff work very effectively together and take advantage of professional opportunities to enhance their own skills. Monitoring and development of teaching and learning are thorough and continual improvement is clear. Staff and the governing body ensure pupils have equal opportunities to succeed in their work.

The headteacher provides the governing body with good information about the school's performance. The expertise of individual governors is used to good effect. While the governing body fulfils its statutory duties, its members recognise that more could be done to develop all governors' understanding of the data provided about the pupils' progress.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory and consistently applied by all staff. The school promotes community cohesion within its own and the local community very well and has profitable links with a school in a large town. Opportunities to extend the pupils' understanding of the diversity of the global community are less well-developed. The school has evaluated its actions and has plans which include continuing its links with pen pals in a Russian and a Chinese school.

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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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
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

The small Early Years class has eleven children on roll. It provides a secure and welcoming environment so children settle quickly and happily into school. Relationships are excellent. Each child is known very well and looked after with great care and attention. Children feel safe. Good assessment pinpoints what each child knows and needs to learn next. Consequently, the good planning identifies activities for each child to undertake to further their knowledge and understanding.

Overall, children make good progress across all the areas of learning. They have developed very positive attitudes to learning and behave exceptionally well. Children work very well independently and in groups, happily initiating conversations with adults about what they are doing. These qualities, together with the exceptional progress they make in learning letter sounds, prepare them well for their start in Year 1. Children with high levels of special needs make excellent progress because the teacher and teaching assistant work very well together to plan small manageable steps to develop self-confidence and learning.

Teaching is good and children love learning because they are provided with a good range of opportunities to explore and discover for themselves. For example, children thoroughly enjoyed finding items to weigh and compared the lightest and heaviest. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those chosen by children. The development of language skills and extending vocabulary is given a high priority. The outstanding teaching of letter sounds and how to use these to read and spell is leading to excellent progress in these areas. For example, almost all children know the sounds of the entire alphabet and can use these to make simple words such as 'mat', 'pen' and 'sit'. Almost all can read commonly used words that cannot easily be worked out by using letter sounds such as 'was', and 'there'. More-able children can work out how to spell complex words such as 'lipstick' and 'lunchbox'.

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Parents and carers are welcomed warmly into school. They are helped and encouraged to contribute to their children's learning. Links with pre-schools are good in ensuring a smooth start to school. The leadership of the Early Years' class is good. There is a clear understanding of what is working well and what needs to be developed and suitable plans are in place to do this.

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

Just over half of parents and carers returned the questionnaire and the very large majority agreed that they are happy with their children's experience at the school. A small number of parents and carers raised two main concerns: that the school does not deal effectively with unacceptable behaviour and that the school does not keep their children safe. It would appear from parents' written comments that the two areas are related. These concerns were followed up during the inspection. Discussions with pupils indicated that they are very confident that staff will 'sort out' any poor behaviour. Inspectors judged that behaviour, during the inspection was good and quite often excellent. The inspection team ascertained that all safeguarding requirements are met.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled 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 38 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 76 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	22	56	14	36	3	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	21	54	10	26	3	8	3	8
My school informs me about my child's progress	12	31	21	54	6	15	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	26	20	51	6	15	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	16	41	19	49	2	5	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	13	33	18	46	5	13	1	3
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	18	46	15	38	5	13	1	3
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)	9	23	22	56	3	8	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	13	33	21	54	5	13	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	26	15	38	9	23	3	8
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	10	26	21	54	5	13	2	5
The school is led and managed effectively	14	36	19	49	4	10	2	5
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	13	33	21	54	5	13	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

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

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 are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



21 February 2011

Dear Children

Inspection of Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Braintree, CM7 4BP

Thank you so much for welcoming me to your school. Like you, I think it is a very friendly place to be and you get on very well together. My particular thanks to those of you who sat and talked to me at lunchtimes. I found what you had to say very helpful. In return, I now want to share with you my findings.

This is a good school. You told me that you enjoy school and I could see why, particularly when I saw Class 3 performing their Aboriginal mime in assembly and an art lesson in Class 1. You told me the teachers are nice and lessons enjoyable. I agree that teaching is good and all the adults care about you a great deal and work hard on your behalf.

I noted that your attainment is above average this year and you are making good progress from the time you start at school because teachers keep a close eye on how well you are getting on. Your headteacher and deputy headteacher provide good leadership. I have set the school two tasks.

To help you to do even better in mathematics.

To train the governing body so that they can monitor how well you are getting on in school and make sure you do as well as possible.

Your school is successful, not only because of what the adults bring to it, but also because of your exceptional contributions. You are very positive about learning and I was very impressed with how welcoming you are to visitors. I'm sure you will try to work even harder in mathematics so you reach standards that are as high as they are in English.

Thank you again for your help and I hope you raise lots of money with your Red Nose Day events.

Yours sincerely

Cheryl Thompson

Lead inspector

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