

Westlands Primary School

Homewood Avenue, Sittingbourne, ME10 1XN

Inspection dates 20–21 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The school has improved rapidly since the previous inspection because of determined and ambitious leaders who have brought out the best in staff and pupils.
- As a result, teaching is now consistently good and pupils are making good progress in all subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and their academic achievement.
- Outstanding leadership and provision in the early years ensure that children get off to a flying start in Reception.
- Across the school, pupils thoroughly enjoy learning, work very hard and take great pride in their achievements.
- Pupils say they feel very safe because the school takes great care of them and ensures their security at all times.
- Standards in reading have risen at a rapid rate in the past year because leaders have tackled weaknesses in pupils' skills through a range of successful initiatives.
- The most-able pupils are now doing much better than previously because teachers constantly challenge them to do their best and check their progress frequently.
- Exceptionally strong partnerships between the trust, the executive board, the governing body and senior leaders continue to drive improvement in all aspects of school life.
- The school has worked hard to involve parents in their children's learning and keep them well informed. Most parents are very happy with the standard of education their children receive.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Although there is much good practice, the quality of teachers' marking and feedback to pupils is variable between classes and year groups.
- Occasionally, pupils make calculations in mathematics without fully understanding the concepts behind them.
- On a few occasions, pupils do not correct errors or follow teachers' 'next steps' advice in their workbooks. This means that errors are then repeated in future work.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in all 17 classes. Four observations were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also carried out learning walks and observed an assembly for pupils in Years 2 to 6.
- Inspectors held discussions with two groups of pupils, as well as talking to pupils informally in lessons and at break times. Together with senior leaders, they examined the work in pupils' books in every year group.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, advisory teacher, and senior and middle leaders. They also met with the Trust Principal and the executive headteacher, the Chair of Governors and three other members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school improvement plan, records of governing body meetings, information about pupils' progress, behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding.
- Inspectors took into account the 36 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the school's most recent survey of parents' views, to which 155 families responded. They also spoke to parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day. Thirty seven responses to the staff questionnaire were taken into account.

Inspection team

Carole Skinner, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
David Webster	Additional inspector
Julie Aldous	Additional inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Westlands is much larger than the average-sized primary school. It became an academy in 2010 and is part of the Swale Academies Trust.
- The school is in the process of expanding from two to three forms of entry. There are currently three classes in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, and two classes in Years 3 to 6.
- Reception children attend full time.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are known to be eligible for the pupil premium is above average. At Westlands, this includes pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those who looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. More than half of these pupils have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The headteacher was appointed as interim headteacher in October 2014. The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2015.
- The school runs a breakfast and after-school club.
- Westlands works in close collaboration with Regis Manor Primary School.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Tackle the remaining inconsistencies in teaching by:
 - ensuring pupils fully understand key mathematical concepts, such as how to calculate fractions of quantities, rather than simply learning the steps (for example, 'divide by the bottom, multiply by the top')
 - making sure that marking and feedback to pupils are consistently of the highest quality, and that teachers' comments give pupils clear guidance on how to improve
 - giving pupils enough time to act upon their teachers' advice, practise skills and correct errors so that they do not repeat them in the future.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are outstanding

- Leaders, managers and governors are uncompromising in their pursuit of excellence. They have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness and have taken decisive action to bring about rapid improvement in a relatively short period of time.
- Improvement planning is exceptionally thorough, with clear targets and timescales. Leaders review their success in meeting these targets rigorously throughout the year. As a result, they have successfully tackled all the weaknesses identified by the last inspection and those identified by the monitoring visit seven months ago.
- The trust has worked very closely with the school to support and accelerate its improvement. The advisory headteacher and executive headteacher continue to provide valuable mentoring and coaching for leaders and staff. This has greatly expanded the school's capacity to build upon its successes.
- The headteacher and other senior leaders have high levels of expertise and are passionate about giving pupils the very best education. Their in-depth monitoring of teaching and learning through frequent lesson observations, drop-ins, scrutiny of pupils' books and information about pupils' progress data has led to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress across the school.
- Leaders meticulously record the information gathered on pupil progress. They use it very effectively as a basis for termly meetings with each member of staff to discuss the progress of their pupils and identify where additional support may be required. Exceptionally thorough systems for tracking the progress of individuals and groups of pupils ensure that none slip through the net.
- Purposeful collaboration between teachers in each year group ensures consistent approaches to planning and delivering the programmes of study. Senior leaders' oversight of year groups' effectiveness ensures that leaders are alert to any issues and take prompt action to address them.
- Subject leaders also play a key part in raising quality. They strongly support their colleagues in extending subject knowledge and exploring creative ways to link subjects together meaningfully.
- The inclusion and pastoral team is effective in ensuring that pupils' individual needs are met. As a result, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, pupils who speak English as an additional language and disadvantaged pupils are all making good and, in some cases, outstanding progress. Some parents said they could not speak highly enough of the quality of care and support their children have received.
- A key factor in the school's improvement has been its success in establishing very high expectations of pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning, and in promoting good relationships. This has resulted in an atmosphere of hard work and respect for others throughout the school. The school is vigilant in ensuring that there is no discrimination and that all pupils have equal opportunities to thrive and achieve well.
- The school makes very effective use of pupil premium funding to provide additional teachers, support staff, specialist support staff and resources to meet each pupil's needs. As a result of the high quality provision for pupils' academic, social, emotional and physical development, there are marked signs of improvement in all areas.
- The curriculum is very well planned to provide pupils with a wide variety of experiences. Essential structured learning, for example through the teaching of phonics (the sounds letters make) and key mathematical concepts, is balanced effectively with opportunities to learn through exploration, problem solving and discussion.
- Staff successfully plan learning around key themes and exploit the obvious links between different subjects. For example, pupils' science books show that teachers capitalise on the opportunity for pupils to apply writing and mathematics skills. The planned activities successfully trigger a sense of wonder and fascination. For example, Year 3 pupils discovered that magnets worked through their chairs and whiteboards, but not through the classroom door.
- There is a strong emphasis on preparing pupils for their future lives and ensuring they understand key features of life in modern Britain, including its cultural diversity. In-school elections for school councillors run along the lines of parliamentary elections, with debates and voting booths. Memorable experiences, such as Year 5's visit to the Houses of Parliament on the day after the General Election, do a great deal to expand pupils' horizons.
- The school provides a wealth of clubs and other extracurricular opportunities, including such diverse activities as archaeology, gardening, street dance and animal club. Take-up rates are high. Pupils also benefit from expert tuition in music, as well as a range of instrumental lessons. All of these activities help to promote pupils' social skills.
- Effective use of the additional sport funding has raised the profile of physical education across the school.

As a result, improved teaching is sharpening pupils' skills and boosting their enthusiasm for sport. The number of sports clubs has increased and there is a wide range of physical activities and games for pupils to enjoy at break and lunchtime. Pupils also take part in more inter-school competitions.

- Safeguarding and child protection requirements are very thorough and meet statutory requirements. Senior leaders ensure that all staff have attended appropriate training and are fully aware of their responsibilities.

■ The governance of the school:

- The executive board provides highly effective strategic oversight of the school and works very closely with the local governing body, some of whom are also members of the executive board. Members of the executive board have supported governors to develop their roles. Governors now provide high levels of challenge to school leaders and are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths and the areas for further development.
- Regular visits to the school, which include learning walks, visits to lessons and 'book looks', all carried out jointly with senior leaders, give governors first-hand information about the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. Governors are well informed about how salary decisions are made, and ensure that any increases are dependent on teachers meeting their targets, which are related to pupils' progress.
- Governors receive a wealth of information about the school's performance and are meticulous in analysing this and making comparisons with national benchmarks. Together with the executive board, they ask searching questions in meetings and regularly check for signs of improvement in areas where there might be cause for concern.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils are highly motivated to learn, and tackle tasks with enthusiasm because, as they told inspectors, teachers make lessons interesting. The vast majority are very attentive in lessons and waste no time in getting down to work once the initial teaching input has been completed. The quality and quantity of work in pupils' books shows that pupils concentrate very well, work hard and take pride in presenting their work neatly.
- Behaviour is exemplary at all times, in the corridors, during assembly, on the stairs, in the dining hall and outside at break times. It is clear that all teachers expect the same very high standards at all times and in all situations. Pupils have no concerns about behaviour and say that adults sort out minor incidents very quickly. Parents greatly appreciate the improvements leaders have made.
- Older pupils look out for younger ones and enjoy taking responsibility in a variety of ways around the school. Pupils take pride in their school and in wearing their school uniform. In Years 5 and 6, pupils enjoy the privilege of wearing blazers the same as those of the Year 7 students in the nearby secondary school, which many usually move to.
- The school has successfully increased attendance rates during the current academic year to broadly average levels. Pupils are very keen to win 100% attendance certificates, as well as the weekly class competition. The family liaison officer is instrumental in helping families to get their children to school regularly and on time. The breakfast club and 'Pete the Punctuality Penguin' have helped to reduce lateness.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding.
- Break times on the very large site are exceptionally well organised to ensure all pupils are kept safe. The different 'zones' are supervised very closely, and staff are very well trained to lead games and engage pupils in productive play, as well as developing their social skills.
- Pupils are very well informed about the potential risks they may encounter, for example when using the internet, and know how to deal with them. Pupils are very knowledgeable about the different forms bullying can take and what to do should any occur.
- Pupils say that bullying is not an issue at the school because staff deal with any unpleasantness swiftly. Pupils are confident that staff listen to their concerns and deal with them promptly.
- Risk assessments are extremely robust, and the school takes prompt action to engage with external agencies if staff raise any concerns about pupils' safety and welfare.

The quality of teaching is good

- Leaders have built very effectively on the improvements in teaching that were noted in the 2014 monitoring inspection report. As a result, teaching is now at least good across the school.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and their behaviour. They plan tasks that interest and engage pupils, and build effectively on their existing knowledge and skills. Teachers use their accurate assessments of pupils' learning to plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils of different abilities.
- Teachers and well-trained teaching assistants are skilled in asking questions that make pupils think for themselves, rather than doing things for them when they make mistakes. Teachers give pupils time to discuss and explain their ideas and their reasoning. This has helped to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills, as well as their powers of reasoning.
- The teaching of reading has improved considerably. Consistent approaches to teaching phonics, from Reception onwards, have raised standards significantly in reading in Years 1 and 2. Effective teaching of guided reading and more opportunities for pupils to enjoy reading, such as Bug Club, have this year brought rapid improvements across Years 3 to 6.
- Writing is taught equally well. Teachers inspire pupils to write, providing a rich and interesting variety of tasks which are often linked to books pupils have read or topics they are studying. Teachers capitalise on every opportunity to hone pupils' skills, encouraging their writing in other subjects such as science and history, and placing strong emphasis on teaching grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Teachers generally ensure that pupils fully understand new learning in mathematics before moving them on to the next stage. This applies especially to pupils who need more support than others, and older pupils who still have gaps in their knowledge and skills due to weaker teaching in previous years. Occasionally, however, teachers do not ensure that pupils fully understand why they work out calculations in a particular way.
- Teachers plan valuable opportunities for pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding in mathematics by applying what they have learned to solve problems and undertake projects. This was seen clearly in a visit to a supermarket, where Year 6 pupils costed out and budgeted for a forthcoming party.
- The introduction of a new marking scheme has done much to boost pupils' understanding and progress. While there is exemplary practice in some classes, pupils' books show there are still inconsistencies between classes and subjects, both in the use and effectiveness of 'next steps' comments and their impact. Pupils are not always given enough time to respond to teachers' written comments. As a result, errors are sometimes repeated in subsequent work.

The achievement of pupils is good

- The actions taken to improve teaching and learning since the last monitoring inspection report have come to fruition over the last 12 months. The 2014 assessments in Year 2 showed a marked improvement in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. This has been sustained and built upon in the current year.
- Attainment also improved significantly in the Year 6 national assessments in 2014, although to a lesser extent in reading than in writing and mathematics. The school has introduced a range of successful strategies to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills. As a result, standards continue to rise across the board and have risen considerably in reading.
- The school's own progress information and evidence in pupils' workbooks show that pupils of all abilities are now making good progress across the school. Minor variations between classes and year groups are being ironed out as new teaching strategies are having effect.
- The most-able pupils are now challenged more consistently and their progress has accelerated accordingly. This is especially the case in Years 5 and 6, where the school has worked hard to overcome the legacy of low expectations that held pupils back in the past. The proportions of pupils who are on course to reach Level 5 in mathematics and writing are in line with the 2014 national figures. They are higher in reading. A few pupils are working towards Level 6 in mathematics and writing, whereas none achieved this level last year.
- Occasionally, in mathematics, pupils know how to carry out calculations, but are not always able to explain the underlying concepts, for example when working out three fifths of a given quantity. A few Year 4 pupils were able to 'divide by the bottom, multiply by the top', but could not explain why.
- Pupils with special educational needs are making good progress because teachers and teaching assistants meet their needs effectively in lessons, sometimes through one-to-one support. In addition, the school has employed specialist teachers and assistants who are trained to deliver tailored programmes to address

pupils' specific needs, such as in language and communication. The pastoral team works closely with staff to support pupils whose social and emotional needs have been a barrier to learning in the past.

- Disadvantaged pupils are making good progress as a result of effective teaching and pastoral support. This is helping to narrow the gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were almost four terms behind other pupils nationally in mathematics and reading, and two terms behind in writing. This was a marked improvement on 2013 when gaps were considerably wider. Compared to their peers in the school, disadvantaged pupils were approximately three terms behind in writing and mathematics and two terms behind in reading. The school's termly pupil performance information shows that these gaps are continuing to reduce as the year progresses.

The early years provision

is outstanding

- Outstanding leadership of the early years provision has enabled the school to build effectively on the good provision seen at the time of the last inspection. Many children start school with skills that are well below those that are typical for their age, especially in communication, language and literacy. They make rapid progress, reaching, in most cases, average standards by the end of Reception.
- Children have a very good understanding of phonics and have made excellent progress in developing effective early reading, writing and mathematical skills. As a result, they are very well prepared for moving into Year 1.
- Teachers and assistants are highly skilled professionals and have in-depth knowledge of how young children learn. They plan a superb range of activities for children to explore and learn from, both in the classrooms and in the extensive, exceptionally well designed and equipped outdoor area.
- Expert teaching of key skills is complemented by a range of free-choice activities, which are planned meticulously to meet the learning requirements for Reception children. Teachers provide clear guidance for other adults who support children's learning. This shows them how to extend children's understanding and language through questioning and adapting activities. Children move freely around the large space and become deeply engrossed in their chosen activities.
- Children delighted in scouring the grass with magnifying glasses in search of 'bugs', which they carried with the utmost care to the 'bug hotel' for further scrutiny. Some used sponges and brushes to scrub clean the trikes in the 'Car Wash', taking turns to collect money and issue tokens. Raised beds provide opportunities to grow plants, while the resident chicken is well cared for.
- Opportunities to develop children's reading, writing and mathematics skills are plentiful in all three classrooms and the outdoor area. High staffing ratios ensure that children are very well supported in their learning. Regular assessments of their skills help staff to build effectively on previously learning.
- Special events enrich children's learning considerably, as when the children designed and built boats from junk materials and sailed them in the first ever 'Westlands Boat Race' in the school swimming pool.
- Classrooms are vibrant with colourful displays that support learning and celebrate children's achievements. Displays of writing and children's learning profiles reflect the extent of their progress over the year and show that they are on course to equal, or surpass, the high standards achieved in 2014.
- Children show high levels of curiosity and confidence and behave impeccably. They play amicably together and share toys and resources readily. Rigorous procedures ensure children's safety at all times.
- Parents speak very highly of the provision and enjoy sharing and contributing to the 'home book' that shows them what their child has learned each day.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	136270
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	462650

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	498
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Kevin Holmes
Interim headteacher	Louise Hopkins
Date of previous school inspection	11–12 December 2013
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