



Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 115175
Local Authority ESSEX
Inspection number 290155
Inspection date 25 January 2007
Reporting inspector Martin Beale

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	The Street
School category	Voluntary aided		Little Waltham, Little Waltham
Age range of pupils	4-11		Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3NY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01245360246
Number on roll (school)	150	Fax number	01245362676
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mr Peter Rudge
		Headteacher	Mrs Susannah Edom-Baker
Date of previous school inspection	3 December 2001		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a smaller than average-sized school serving a small village and the surrounding area to the north of Chelmsford. It has quite high levels of pupil mobility. Free school meals entitlement is below average. The proportion of the pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below the national average as is the number learning English as an additional language. The pupils are taught in five mixed-age classes. An average proportion of the pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities. Attainment on entry fluctuates but is often below the national average.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Little Waltham Primary is a good school. It is popular, improving and has some outstanding features. It provides good value for money. This confirms the school's view of its qualities. The school has created an exciting environment for learning through its outstanding curriculum. As one pupil said, 'Teachers keep finding ways of making learning fun.' A major factor in the school's success and improvement in recent years is good leadership and management. Strong leadership from the headteacher focuses the staff team on improvement and on ensuring that complacency does not set in. Governance is good. Governors carefully check that their policies are being implemented and challenge the staff to do better. This places the school in a secure position to improve further.

One example of this improvement can be seen in Reception. Through much effort, teaching is now good and the activities interest the children by linking various areas of learning. Children make good progress, but because of their starting points many do not reach the levels expected by the time they enter Year 1.

The recent focus on improving mathematics teaching has also been particularly beneficial. Pupils make better progress in mathematics than in English because teaching has become more focused. Pupils thoroughly enjoy mathematics lessons. The school has now turned its attention to finding more effective ways of teaching English. This is starting to bear fruit. The current focus on learning through film is proving very productive. Writing has become more enjoyable for the pupils. Boys, who might otherwise find writing less interesting, are gaining much from this development.

Achievement is good throughout the school and standards are broadly average by Year 6 because of the good teaching. The experienced teaching team is aided by an effective group of support staff. Parents also make a considerable contribution, hearing pupils read each morning. The needs of pupils who might find learning difficult are carefully identified and effective individual plans constructed for their support. The expertise of outside agencies is engaged when necessary. These pupils also make good progress.

Parents are very much in support of the school. They rightly feel confident that their children are looked after well. Care, support and guidance are good. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued. They say there is always an adult for them to turn to if they have a problem. The pupils' outstanding personal development and well-being contribute greatly to their progress and to the harmonious atmosphere throughout the school. The pupils sensibly express their ideas and contribute much through the school council and the many responsibilities accepted readily by the older pupils. They help to place the school at the heart of the village and contribute much to the community at large, through their concern for environmental issues. The pupils understand how to behave safely and cope with risky situations. They learn to adopt a healthy lifestyle, take part in much physical activity and make sensible choices of food and drink. They develop teamwork skills that give them a strong platform for their future development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in English by building on recent developments in the teaching of writing so that improvements are continued and rising standards sustained.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Standards are rising, as is the progress made by pupils, particularly in mathematics and science. The pupils make good progress while at the school. More able pupils and those needing extra support achieve equally well given their different starting points. Most pupils reach, and a reasonable number exceed, national expectations by the end of Year 6. They also generally reach the targets their teachers set them. Pupils' progress in mathematics is outstanding particularly in Years 3 to 6, but is only satisfactory in English. Recent action by the school is leading to improvements in writing and reading, but this has not yet led to better test results. Assessment results for Year 2 pupils have fluctuated slightly because of the different profiles of each cohort, but are generally broadly average. Year 6 test results have steadily improved and were close to the national average in 2006.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and all that it provides for them. They are very polite, confident and take their many responsibilities seriously and with pride. They thrive on the challenges presented to them and develop into mature young people who are well prepared for the next stages of their learning. Their behaviour is of a high standard both in lessons and around the school. Attendance has improved and is now slightly above average. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They reflect thoughtfully, such as when writing their own prayers. They have a sharp sense of right and wrong, and genuinely care for each other in a happy family atmosphere. Special events such as 'Multi-cultural Week' help the pupils to gain a much improved understanding and respect for the customs of others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The pupils make good progress because most lessons are taught well and several have outstanding features. Teachers have an accurate picture of what the pupils can do. They use this to match activities and their teaching methods not just to the pupils' abilities but also to the different ways in which they learn. Pupils understand the purpose of the work they are doing and are clear about their teachers' expectations of them. The wide range of methods adopted engages the pupils who participate in

lessons with much enthusiasm. They feel confident that their contributions will be valued and are happy to answer questions and share in discussions with their 'talk partners'. Teachers are beginning to use interactive whiteboards and other technology to make lessons interesting and are striving to improve their expertise further in this area.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is planned and reviewed very carefully to develop the pupils academically and personally. Teamwork and enterprise skills are promoted well across many subjects, as are basic skills of literacy and numeracy and, to a growing extent, information and communication technology (ICT). The development of writing through the stimulus of film is an exciting initiative much enjoyed by all. Individual programmes are matched very closely to the different needs of the pupils. Provision for gifted and talented pupils has been extended considerably, and is an area the school is seeking to improve further through its 'cluster group' of local primary schools. Links with a local specialist secondary school also considerably benefit the pupils. Music makes a very significant contribution to the life of the school and the recent introduction of French and dance has added greatly to the pupils' experiences. These are also considerably extended and enriched by a wide range of much valued extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors into the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The strong commitment of staff to ensuring the welfare of the pupils is clearly evident. Health and safety procedures are applied rigorously and child protection arrangements are understood by all. Pupils with specific medical conditions are catered for well and monitored carefully. There are thorough systems for tracking the progress of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented. Assessment data is used well to identify where intervention is needed if pupils are falling behind. This information is also used to set pupils individual targets, which are regularly shared with parents. The pupils generally know how well they are doing but they are not always clear about the steps that are needed for them to achieve their targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher keeps staff focused sharply on meeting the needs of all pupils and seeking improvements in provision and the school's performance. Initiatives are planned carefully and the impact of their implementation evaluated thoroughly. Rigorous systems are in place to ensure that teachers do their jobs as well as they can, and training is provided to improve their performance and that of the school. Test and other assessment data is analysed carefully to support the identification of priorities for development and to evaluate the school's success. Self-evaluation is largely

accurate, but the school is not always clear about the impact of its action on the pupils' personal development, so is not completely sure what works best. Governors are fully involved in helping to identify strengths and in planning for the school's future. Funding has been used well to improve the buildings and outside areas considerably, with further plans prepared for further developments.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

25 January 2007

Dear Pupils

Little Waltham Church of England (VA) Primary School, The Street, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3NY

I am writing to thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave me when I visited your school. You are a credit to yourselves and the school. You were all very kind, polite and helpful, and showed how proud you are of your school. I enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn, particularly through the writing you are doing based on the films you are watching. There are many aspects of your school that I liked. You, your parents and teachers are right in thinking that you go to a good school.

You make good progress during your time at the school and outstanding progress in mathematics, which is a subject you really enjoy. Your teachers provide a very wide range of interesting activities to help you learn. You thoroughly enjoy school, work hard and behave sensibly. The care and support you receive is good, particularly when you find learning difficult. You are learning the importance of diet and exercise for a healthy lifestyle. You take your responsibilities very seriously and make a considerable contribution to the life of the school and the local community.

Your teachers and governors are trying hard to make the school even better. There is one area where we all think that improvements could be made. Your written work is improving but there is still more to be done if you are to maintain this and get better test results. I feel sure you and your teachers will work hard to make this all happen.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale Lead inspector