



Wareside Church of England Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 117412
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290827
Inspection date 2 November 2006
Reporting inspector Ian Nelson

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Reeves Green
School category	Voluntary aided		Wareside, Ware
Age range of pupils	4-11		Hertfordshire SG12 7QR
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01920 462354
Number on roll (school)	49	Fax number	01920 462354
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Donna Chamberlain
		Headteacher	Mrs Elaine Batten
Date of previous school inspection	21 January 2002		

Age group 4-11	Inspection date 2 November 2006	Inspection number 290827
--------------------------	---	------------------------------------

© Crown copyright 2006

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small primary school serving an area that includes private and social housing. Few children are eligible for free school meals. All the children are White British. There are more children with special educational needs, including statements, than is usually found. Children start school with the skills and knowledge expected of their age. The headteacher has been in post just over a year. She has a regular teaching commitment of two days each week. She is the third headteacher in four years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory. Its small size means that all children are well known to all staff and there is a delightful family ethos. Parents appreciate the quality of pastoral care with comments like, 'The staff, from headteacher to dinner ladies, are approachable and caring.' They say that not only do the adults in school care for their children but that, 'The older children will look out for the younger ones.' Children also value the small size of the school because, 'you get to know everybody'. Because children feel valued and secure their personal development is good. They enjoy school, as is shown by the high attendance figures. They say there is no bullying because behaviour is good and they fully understand the school rules and what will happen if they break them.

Children's good personal development is not matched by their achievement between the assessments in Year 2 and those in Year 6, which is satisfactory. Standards fluctuate year by year because of the small numbers of children in each year group, but are broadly average currently by Year 6. Although the school has extensive systems to check how well children are learning, these are not detailed enough to show which precise elements of each subject children find easy or hard. Consequently, the targets teachers set for them are not always high enough. This is why care, guidance and support are good overall rather than outstanding, despite the strengths in pastoral care.

Because the systems for checking how well children are doing do not give enough detail on what they find difficult, some of the work they are given in lessons is either too hard or too easy. This results in teaching and learning that are broadly satisfactory but do not give older and more able children enough opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good and as a result children settle quickly and do well. The school provides a good range of activities in lessons and after school to help children to learn. It has developed good links with a neighbouring specific learning difficulties base in a primary school which provides expertise and support for those children who find learning hard.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher and governors have identified accurately what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve. They have clear plans to build on strengths and tackle weaknesses and have all but eradicated unsatisfactory teaching. However, the plans focus on putting systems in place and do not show clearly enough how those systems will help children to learn better. Given that the headteacher and governors have secure arrangements to check how well the school is doing and have made improvements in teaching and resources and introduced a new marking system in literacy, the school is satisfactorily placed to continue improving.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve teaching so that it is consistently good.

- Improve the systems for checking how well children are doing to show precisely in what aspects of each subject they need more support or challenge.
- Ensure that the plans for school improvement go beyond putting systems in place and focus on how those systems will help children to learn better.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory. The achievement of Year 6 leavers has fluctuated in recent years from unsatisfactory to particularly good. The school attributes the fluctuations to personal circumstances, citing for example a group that was particularly motivated and achieved well, or another where the special educational or emotional needs of children depressed their achievement. However, the school recognises that part of the reason is inconsistencies in teaching, though this has now improved. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups of children, and those who find learning hard achieve as well as their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development is good. They appreciate the need for plenty of exercise and a balanced diet to keep themselves healthy. They point out that school lunches always include at least two vegetables and some fruit towards the five portions a day they need. They enjoy their physical education lessons and after-school sports activities, and play energetically but safely at break times. There are few bumps and bruises because children play with an awareness of others. They have ample opportunities to reflect in assemblies, like the one on trust and promises, and they learn about a range of cultures through subjects like religious education, history and geography. Their good social skills and average standards in literacy and mathematics prepare them satisfactorily for the next stage of their schooling and adult life. There is a satisfactory range of opportunities for them to contribute to the school and wider community as school councillors, monitors, and playground friends. However, children do not have enough opportunities to take responsibility for aspects in their own learning.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers make increasingly effective use of the interactive whiteboards to gain and hold children's attention in lessons. They provide practical activities that children enjoy, as in a science lesson on dissolving materials. Teaching assistants make a significant contribution to helping children to learn, particularly those who need extra support because they find learning hard. A

new system for marking children's work in literacy tells them clearly what is good about their work and how to make it better, but this has not yet been rolled out to other subjects. Too often the work children are given is not matched closely enough to their learning needs so that it is too easy, or too hard. In some cases, it is too directed by the teacher, so that children lose the chance to explore and discover for themselves.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of learning activities that covers all the required subjects. Learning is brought to life through educational visits, including residential trips. Specialist teaching in music and physical education helps children to enjoy these subjects. The Foundation Stage is well provided for with its own classroom, and lesson planning ensures a good balance between teacher-directed and self-chosen activities. The school does not yet make as much use of computers as it might in helping children to learn. It is still developing useful links between different subjects to make learning more interesting and effective.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The school has in place all the required checks and procedures to ensure the safety and welfare of the children. Its church status, coupled with its small size, helps to ensure that the school is a caring community where children are well known to all the adults. Consequently they always have someone to turn to with issues or concerns. The staff go the extra mile to support children who need additional help and work well with outside experts like the neighbouring specific learning difficulties base in a primary school. Although the school has systematic procedures for checking how well children are doing, these are not detailed enough to ensure that all children get hard enough work in lessons.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

One parent wrote that, 'The school could do with a bit more stability to be able to develop further', having had so many changes of leadership in a short period. This is a view shared by the school. The headteacher has quickly gained an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and set a clear direction for improvement. In this she is ably supported by a good governing body committed to continuous improvement of its own role and of the school itself. The school has reallocated responsibilities for each subject so that all teachers now have leadership roles. However, these roles are too recent for them to have yet had a significant impact on the outcomes for learners and further training and development are planned. The school has a clear plan of action to improve its effectiveness but it does not always track through how its proposed actions will help children to learn better. Parents are wholly positive about the school, with one summing up their views

by writing, 'The head is doing a great job; both of my children find her strict, but kind and fair. As a parent I find her very easy to approach and talk to about any problems.'

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	3
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	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

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

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
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

3 November 2006

Dear Children

Wareside C of E Aided Primary School, Reeves Green, Wareside, Ware, Hertfordshire. SG12 7QR.

Thank you for making me so welcome when I came to inspect your school recently. I enjoyed joining some of you for lunch and seeing you at work and play. This letter is to tell you what I think is good about your school and how it could be better.

I think the adults in school care for you well so that you feel safe and secure. You also make a good job of looking after each other. You told me there is hardly any bullying and that behaviour is good. That is certainly what I saw in your lessons, at lunchtime and in the playground. You work hard and enjoy school, especially the practical lessons like science experiments. Although you work hard in lessons there are times when the work you get is too hard or too easy. As a result you make satisfactory progress in your learning. You could do even better if the lessons were always good and if teachers knew exactly what you find hard or easy about each subject.

I have asked the headteacher, governors and teachers to make sure all your lessons are good in future. They will improve the way they check what you know in each subject so that you all get work that is hard enough. The school council does a good job of telling the adults what you think about school. Your headteacher, governors and teachers have plans for making the school even better. I have asked them to make sure that the plans say clearly how the actions they intend to take will help you to learn better.

You can play your part in helping the school to get better by continuing to work hard and look after each other.

Ian Nelson Lead inspector