

# Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	115110
<b>Local Authority</b>	Essex
<b>Inspection number</b>	311836
<b>Inspection dates</b>	3–4 July 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Aldridge

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary controlled
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	73
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Dave Sexton
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Bronwen Ferland
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	14 July 2003
<b>School address</b>	Silver Street Wethersfield Braintree CM7 4BP
<b>Telephone number</b>	01371 850220
<b>Fax number</b>	01371 851200

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<b>Age group</b>	4–11
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

This is a smaller than average primary school. The knowledge and skills of children when they enter the school varies each year but attainment is generally typical for their age. Almost all of the pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. A significant proportion of pupils leave or join the school other than at the usual time. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The school forms part of a network of schools and is a member of the Braintree Schools Federation. It has Healthy Schools Status and the Sportsmark award. The school is in the first year of a two-year national pilot project, 'Making Good Progress'.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Wethersfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary is a good school, which is how it sees itself. Pupils love coming to school and parents are delighted with the education it provides for their children, 'I could not praise this school enough' was one typical comment. The strong Christian ethos of the school and good relationships between all parties contribute well to its success as does the good leadership and management.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress. From Year 1 onwards, pupils achieve well because they are taught well, have a good range of enjoyable learning experiences and are well cared for, guided and supported. Standards in Year 2 and Year 6 fluctuate from year-to-year but this year they are average in Year 2 and above average in Year 6. They are not as high in science as they are in English or mathematics in either year group. There was a similar picture in 2007. The school has rightly identified science as an area for improvement, and suitable action is identified in the school's improvement plan.

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are guided well in how to behave and behaviour is good, as is attendance. Pupils have a good awareness of healthy living because they are taught effectively about it. Most make healthy choices at school by eating sensibly and taking plenty of exercise. They learn how to keep themselves safe on the roads and are careful when using the internet to research information to help them with their work. Pupils contribute well to school and community life. They willingly take on responsibilities in class and assembly, distribute harvest produce in the village and raise funds for charities. Because they develop well their basic skills and learn to work effectively with others, pupils are well prepared for secondary education. They approach the move with confidence, because transition arrangements are effective.

Good improvement since the last inspection includes the development of the buildings to create a hall, a library, an additional classroom and office accommodation. The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has developed well and standards have risen as a result. There is now a better balance in the curriculum than previously and staff are busy creating a curriculum that links subjects together into appealing and meaningful topics. Pupils enjoy this approach. Subject leaders manage their areas effectively and oversee the provision well. However, they have not yet established a manageable way to check the new curriculum to make sure that pupils are still learning the right things and that standards are not slipping when subjects are linked together through topic work. Self-evaluation in the school is good and the school knows where its strengths and areas for development lie. Good account is taken of parents' and pupils' views and governors are involved effectively in the process. As a result, the school has a good capacity to improve further.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

Good liaison with parents and the local pre-school help children to settle quickly and achieve well from starting points that are broadly in line with those expected. They are carefully assessed and their subsequent progress checked. Any with difficulties are soon spotted and suitable action taken to support them. Teaching is good. Children are provided with a good variety of activities across all areas of learning and there is a suitable balance of sessions led by the teacher and those where children are guided to select activities. Classrooms are vibrant and stimulating

environments. The covered outdoor area benefits children's learning and provides them with access to play equipment such as a climbing frame. Governors have suitably allocated funds for building work, scheduled for completion this summer, to enclose an area of the playground where staff will be able to leave equipment out, such as tricycles. At present, equipment has to be put out and cleared away before the main school playtime, which is time consuming for staff. Children make good progress from their starting points; this year almost all will reach the early learning goals, and some will exceed them.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the rate of progress in science so that standards are as high as those in English and mathematics.
- Establish a more manageable means of monitoring and evaluating the curriculum to replace the present rolling programme.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Achievement is good overall. Most pupils make good progress and this is evident in the school's tracking information. Staff know the pupils and their individual circumstances very well and they help the few who fall behind. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress because they are well supported. Standards vary although they are most often average. They are occasionally above average in some years. However for the last two years, standards in science have not been as high as they were in either English or mathematics in Year 2 and Year 6. Analysis of pupils' work and test results has led to the school rightly providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their investigative skills.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils are polite and helpful and show empathy for others who are less fortunate. For instance, they recently raised funds for the Chinese earthquake appeal. Older pupils look after younger ones and also entertain village residents to an Easter tea each year. Through the work of the effective school council, pupils learn how to contribute to the school community and understand the importance of responsibilities as well as rights. Pupils take advantage of the school's good opportunities for celebrating their successes within and outside school, which contributes positively to their self-esteem. Links with schools in Russia and China foster awareness of the world beyond their own country and visits to places of worship belonging to other religions encourages respect for the cultures and beliefs of others. Older pupils learn enterprise skills when they run the tuck-shop. Most make healthy choices at school although this is not always reflected in their lunchboxes.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Good relationships between all members of the school community help to create a positive climate for learning. As a result, pupils are confident to ask and answer questions. They say that they enjoy their lessons because teachers 'make them fun'. Accurate assessment is used

well to plan tasks that challenge pupils of all abilities and there is a good level of adult support as classes are small. Teachers and pupils use ICT with confidence and pupils work independently as well as collaboratively. In almost all lessons, pupils progress at a good pace, although occasionally teachers allow whole-class teaching to go on for too long and pupils' interest wanes. Pupils are involved well in their own learning. Most know their targets and the objectives of each lesson; they self-assess and older pupils confidently use success criteria to support their learning.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum has improved since the last inspection so that pupils now have a good balance of experiences. It has also been extended to include a modern foreign language for all and there is an impressive range of extra curricular clubs, which parents and pupils appreciate. Learning is brought to life by the addition of themed days and weeks, visits, visitors and a residential journey for older pupils. Pupils like the way teachers are linking subjects into topics such as 'The Ancient Greeks'. These experiences provide good opportunities for pupils to acquire basic skills and increase their personal development well. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory, although this is accurately identified as an area for further improvement in the school development plan.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff take good care of pupils and there are secure arrangements for keeping them safe. Risks are properly assessed and suitable action is taken to minimise these. Governors and staff regularly check health and safety arrangements to make sure that pupils are protected. Pupils are well supported and guided through simple rules on how to behave to individual targets for improving their basic skills, although a few are unclear about the latter. Good links with external agencies secure additional support and advice for pupils, and staff go the extra mile to secure services such as counselling. Academic progress is carefully tracked by staff, and additional support is provided where needed.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher provides good leadership. Parents appreciate her calm and efficient manner and value the approachable staff. Communication across the school is good so all staff are well informed. Leadership roles are shared suitably between the teaching staff and all are responsible for several subjects. In the past, they have managed their workloads effectively by concentrating on certain subjects each year. However, now that teachers are working on a new curriculum that links subjects together, the system for checking its effectiveness is not as manageable as it was previously. Governance is good because the governing body provides challenge and governors are skilled and supportive of the school. Several visit frequently and they are well informed as a result. For instance, they established that money has been spent wisely when they surveyed how well staff and pupils were using ICT resources. They also contribute effectively to the planning of improvements.

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## Annex A

## 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
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
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?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

7 July 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wethersfield CofE VC Primary School, Braintree, CM7 4BP

Thank you for making me welcome in your school. A special thanks to those who gave up their playtime to talk to me. I enjoyed my visit very much.

I came to the school to find out how well you are all getting on and see whether there are any things that the school could do better.

I agree with the staff that your school is a good one. Your parents are pleased with it and you told me that you like lots of things about it too. It was pleasant to be in a school where everyone gets on so well together and the atmosphere helps you all to learn. I was pleased to hear that you all feel safe in school and look after one another. Almost all of you are making good progress and you are developing well as young people. You behave well and your attendance is good. You know how to be healthy and how to keep yourselves safe. You also do various jobs around the school willingly and properly. You help others who are less fortunate than you are and learn about other people's customs and cultures. Because you develop your English, mathematics and ICT skills successfully, you are well prepared for secondary school. I was pleased to hear that Year 6 are confident about moving on.

There are two things that the staff are going to do. You do not do as well in science as you do in English or mathematics so teachers are going to help you improve your skills. They are planning to teach you more topics in the future instead of individual subjects, because you enjoy these more. They need to make sure that you still learn the right things so they are going to find a manageable way of doing this. You can help with improvements by keeping up the good work and good attendance.

My best wishes to you all for the future.

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector