

Wilbury Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117121
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312499
Inspection dates	9–10 September 2008
Reporting inspector	Susan Aldridge

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	298
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Ian Marsh
Headteacher	Mr James Kerr
Date of previous school inspection	26 April 2004
School address	Bedford Road Letchworth Garden City Hertfordshire SG6 4DU
Telephone number	01462 620410
Fax number	01462 620409

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors

Description of the school

Wilbury is a large school that serves an area of mixed social circumstances. About three quarters of pupils are of White British heritage. A smaller than average proportion speak English as an additional language. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is higher than average, although a relatively low percentage have a statement of special educational need. The proportion eligible for free school meals is below average. The school forms part of an extended schools network. It is facing an influx of pupils following the planned closure of a nearby primary school in July 2009. Linked to this, Wilbury lost its deputy headteacher in July 2008, and the leadership team was subsequently re-organised. The school's work has been recognised by Eco Schools Silver, Activemark and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Wilbury's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, which is how it sees itself. It provides a satisfactory quality of education and sound value for money. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

Parents are very positive about what the school provides for their children. They find the staff welcoming and approachable. Pupils particularly enjoy the excellent variety of clubs and activities, established through the extended schools network, and parents appreciate these too. They recognise the school's success in encouraging pupils' personal development, which is good. Amongst other things, the high uptake of sporting activities encourages pupils to keep fit and healthy. The curriculum, which is satisfactory, offers many opportunities for pupils to socialise and the school's positive ethos and celebration of diversity encourage pupils to behave well and respect others' beliefs and values. The headteacher sets the tone for the school, and the good relationships amongst staff and pupils contribute to its harmonious learning environment. The school taps into local services well to enrich pupils' experiences and access additional support, and there are mutually beneficial links with community groups. Pupils are taught well about how to keep themselves safe and they feel secure in school. Care of pupils has a high priority in the school, and parents are confident that their children are well cared for. The headteacher personally takes charge of child protection matters. All the required checks are carried out on staff, but the record of these omits a small amount of information and, therefore, does not meet requirements.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. From average starting points, they make steady progress, and standards by Year 6 are average. This is largely because teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. Whilst there are several good features of teaching, not all teachers plan well enough to meet the needs of all ability groups. In particular, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. A few parents observed that children could do better if 'pushed a bit further'. The school recognises this, and has been working hard to improve standards. This year there was an improvement in reading, writing and mathematics results. Academic guidance is satisfactory. Marking is mostly thorough but is not consistently good across the school. The school has rather a complex system for setting English and mathematics targets for pupils and few pupils know what their targets are. As a result, these strategies are only moderately successful in helping pupils to progress. Nonetheless, pupils' satisfactory progress in basic skills means that they have a sound preparation for the academic demands of secondary schooling.

There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Self-evaluation is satisfactory. The school accurately diagnoses where its strengths and weaknesses lie and involves pupils, parents, staff and governors in the process. It takes suitable action to address areas for development but the work done to raise standards does not always have the desired impact. This is partly because the school has not always had reliable assessment information including where pupils start in every year group. This makes it difficult for managers to demonstrate the value that the school adds. However, it now has a suitable tracking system and a well-informed assessment co-ordinator is leading the necessary development. Occasionally in the past developments have stalled because of a lack of clarity about who has responsibility for these, but since the recent re-organisation responsibilities for key areas of the school's work are well defined. Although several staff are new to their current roles, they are competent and confident in carrying these out. There is satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What the school should do to improve further

- Plan effectively for the full range of pupils' abilities, particularly the more able.
- Ensure that all pupils know their personal targets and that marking of their work helps them to improve.
- Establish accurate assessments of pupils' starting points in every year and use this with the school's tracking system to evaluate progress made by pupils.
- Ensure that the record of checks carried out on staff meets requirements.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Although overall standards have risen slightly since the last inspection, they remain average in Year 6. The school recognises that the key to raising standards further is to raise the attainment of more able pupils. For instance, standards in science have risen since the last inspection, but the proportion of pupils who reached Level 4 and above was below the national figure this summer. There was a similar picture in English, despite a significant improvement in writing. Although boys still do not do as well in writing as girls, reflecting the national picture, the school is successfully closing the gap. In July 2008, the proportion of pupils who reached Level 5 in writing was more than double that in 2007, although it remained below the national figure for the proportion reaching Level 4 or higher. Improvement is linked to increased skills of teachers, additional support for pupils who needed an extra boost and more confident leadership of the subject leader. Since the last inspection, there had been a small decline in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in mathematics. This summer, the proportion reaching Level 4 and above is similar to the national figure. The school's tracking information suggests that pupils who find learning difficult, those from minority ethnic groups and those who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to others.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good and they benefit particularly from the school's good moral guidance and a wealth of social opportunities. The caring attitude of the staff and the positive school ethos nurture and develop the pupils' growing independence and sense of responsibility. As a result, pupils readily volunteer to take on positions of responsibility. The local community benefits from the harvest goods distributed by pupils and the entertainment provided by the choir. Activities of the Eco school initiative develop in pupils a strong awareness of their responsibility for the environment. They enjoy considerable successes in sporting competitions and parents say that their children quickly develop self-confidence. Many pupils choose healthy and active life styles. They behave safely around the school and look after one another. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to the school community. Attendance is average; the school sets targets for improving this and met these this year. Pupils are polite, helpful and considerate and the school community is characterised by a high degree of racial harmony. By Year 6, pupils have developed satisfactorily their basic skills in preparation for the next step in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Although it is satisfactory overall, there is much that is good about teaching. Teachers feel well supported in extending their professional skills and developing innovative practice. They have good relationships with pupils, who are confident learners. The three-part lesson is well established, teachers ensure that pupils are aware of the objectives of each sessions, and make use of success criteria so that pupils are involved in their learning. The use of 'talk partners' helps maximise pupils' involvement as well as developing their speaking, listening and social skills. Teachers use a satisfactory range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), to bring learning to life and to keep pupils interested and involved. Planning is satisfactory but inconsistent. In the best examples, teachers ring the changes in a variety of ways, with ability groups tackling different tasks, for instance. In other sessions, there is a 'one size fits all' approach and a few pupils are not sufficiently challenged, especially more able pupils.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is enriched particularly by themed days, visits, a residential school journey and an excellent range of after-school clubs provided through partnerships with other schools in the area. All of these add enjoyment for pupils and have a very positive effect on their personal development. The curriculum promotes pupils' academic development satisfactorily. There are suitable programmes for pupils with additional needs and provision for gifted and talented pupils is adequate and growing. Strategies for developing pupils' skills in English and mathematics are satisfactory and the school recognises that it needs to continue the work it has started to further develop provision for ICT. Year teams plan together and link subjects to create topics that make learning more meaningful and exciting for pupils. A recently appointed assistant headteacher has taken over as curriculum leader and is continuing the work of establishing an overview of the whole curriculum.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

This is a very caring school. Transition arrangements are good, pupils feel valued as individuals, there is little bullying and instances of this are dealt with effectively. The peer mentoring system supports pupils in working out problems together. Links with outside professionals are effective and help provide support for groups of pupils who need this. Most procedures for safeguarding vulnerable pupils are good, especially staff training, but the single central record of staff checks is not fully compliant with the regulations.

Pupils get satisfactory guidance about how to improve their work. Although satisfactory overall, marking is of variable quality and does not always provide enough guidance to pupils. Few pupils know what their personal targets are in English and mathematics, as the school's system is unnecessarily complex. A suitable system of tracking pupils' progress enables staff to identify pupils who are falling behind and they then intervene with support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

There is a clear vision for the school, developed in consultation with parents, pupils, staff and governors. The school's work is sufficiently focused on raising standards. Challenging targets are set for raising the attainment of pupils, but occasionally these are over-ambitious. In a few respects, school self-evaluation is too generous. Its evaluation of the value it adds to standards is limited a little by the lack of reliability of assessment of pupils' starting points, and the school is aware of this and has started to address it. Subject coordinators complete a self-evaluation document for their subject each year and an action plan that drives development. Parents' and pupils' views are taken seriously and constructive criticism is acted upon to effect improvements.

The ethnic mix of pupils is reflected in the governing body, the school successfully fosters an understanding of community diversity, and opens its doors to a variety of community groups. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are most supportive: they are linked to subjects and visit the school regularly to see at first-hand how well things are going. They hold the school to account but are not directly involved in improvement planning.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

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/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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 leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
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	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	No
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**

11 September 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wilbury School, Letchworth, SG6 4DU

Thank you for making us welcome in your school, and especially to those of you that spoke to us about school life. We enjoyed our visit. We came to find out how well you are all getting on and what could be improved.

We were impressed with you! You are polite and well behaved and you and your parents told us how much you enjoy coming to school. There is a very pleasant atmosphere in the school because you all get on so well together. We found that you develop well as young citizens. We were delighted to see so many volunteer to train as peer mediators! You also help out in the local community and raise funds for those less fortunate than you. You certainly know how to be fit and healthy as many of you take part in the large number of sporting activities and represent the school well in competitions. You know well how to keep yourselves safe and behave sensibly around school. You are getting along well enough in school. Staff are already helping you to improve on this as they would like you all to make good progress.

They have agreed to do four main things to improve the school. They are going to make sure that everyone has work to do in class that is not too easy or too hard but just right. They are going to mark your work so that you know exactly what to do to improve it, and make sure that you all know your English and mathematics targets. They will be able to find out if these things are helping you to make better progress by being sure they can measure the progress you make each year you are in the school. They are also going to keep a full record of the checks they carry out to make sure you are safe in school. You can help with improvement by attending as well as you possibly can and remembering what your targets are.

We wish you all well.

Yours sincerely

Mrs S Aldridge

Lead inspector