

West Rise Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114467
Local Authority	East Sussex
Inspection number	326015
Inspection dates	26–27 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Michael Chisnall HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Angus Scott
Headteacher	Mike Fairclough
Date of previous school inspection	13–14 March 2006
School address	Chaffinch Road, Langney Eastbourne East Sussex BN23 7SL
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Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector. The inspectors visited eight lessons, and held meetings with senior leaders, staff, groups of pupils and members of the governing body. They observed the school's work and looked at curriculum plans, the school improvement plan, records of pupils' progress and those records relating to the vetting of staff. In addition, 22 questionnaires were returned from parents and 18 from staff. The inspection looked in detail at the following:

- the progress made by pupils in lessons and over time
- strategies to improve reading and writing skills
- the effectiveness of support given to pupils at risk of underachieving
- the quality of teaching and learning, and the efforts made by senior leaders to improve them.

Information about the school

The school has reduced in size since the last inspection, but the overall make-up of the pupils remains the same. The school is fully staffed, although there has been some staff turnover in the last year and the senior management team is newly formed.

	School's figures	School's figures compared with other schools
School size	234	Average
Free school meals	25%	Above average
Proportions of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities	26%	Above average
Proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups	11%	Below average
Proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language	5%	Below average
Proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs	1.7%	Average

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

West Rise is a good school that is improving rapidly. This is because senior leaders have clear ideas about what needs improving and how this should be done. As a result, pupils who entered the school with low starting points are making up ground and reaching standards that are close to national averages. This represents good progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. This has been achieved through:

- better teaching and learning
- a curriculum that meets pupils' academic and emotional needs
- secure assessment of pupils' progress, and
- targeted support for those pupils who are not making sufficient progress.

Inspectors observed much good teaching and learning across the school. However, this good practice is not yet consistent in every class. Senior leaders are active in observing lessons and helping teachers to improve their practice. They have a detailed understanding of where strengths and weaknesses lie. Nevertheless, their evaluations of lessons do not take enough account of what pupils are learning and whether this is good enough. Plans for improving the work of the school are thorough and well organised, although they do not make sufficiently clear the expected gains in pupils' learning or well-being. The governing body is supportive of the school, but does not provide the rigorous challenge that the school needs.

The school is on a journey of improvement, but there is still more to be done. Its capacity to do this is good because it has effective senior leaders and a recent track record of success.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching and learning in all classes is as good as the best by:
 - Getting the challenge right for all groups of pupils, especially the more able.
 - Using more challenging questions in lessons.
 - Making marking more consistently constructive.
 - Ensuring pupils gain a better understanding of what they need to do to improve.

- Make the monitoring of lessons and the school's overall planning for improvement more effective by:
 - Having a sharper focus on what pupils are learning when evaluating lessons.
 - Making clear the expected benefits for pupils in their learning or well-being when making plans for improvement.
- Improve the work of the governing body by:
 - Enabling it to be a better critical friend and to offer the school greater challenge.
 - Ensuring that more governors visit lessons and develop a better understanding of what goes on.

How well does the school meet the needs of individuals and different groups of pupils?

2

Pupils are achieving well; this has not been the case in recent years, when attainment has been falling and pupils have not done as well as they should. Thanks to better teaching, assessment and more astute leadership, this situation has turned round. Pupils are now reaching standards that are close to average with particularly good gains in writing skills, especially for boys, who do better than expected nationally. Standards in art and information and communication technology (ICT) are good. The quality of learning is good with most groups of pupils making good progress. Their exercise books demonstrate very clearly the good progress they have made since the start of the year.

Pupils have very positive attitudes towards their work and are keen to do well; they try hard. For example, the enthusiasm with which Year 5 pupils used adjectival clauses to improve a story was impressive. They responded to the teacher's skilled questions extremely well and did not want to stop writing when the lesson ended. Learning is less effective in the minority of lessons that are satisfactory rather than good. Here, pupils are not challenged or inspired as well as they might be, and the rate of progress slows.

Those pupils who are vulnerable to underachievement make the same progress as others because of well targeted support. Teachers and teaching assistants work together to ensure that their needs are met. Inspectors noted that teaching assistants were skilled in asking questions of pupils that helped them think and learn, and knew when to let them work independently. In one lesson on multiplication and division facts, the giving of very short time targets spurred a group of pupils on as they experienced success very quickly. The school is particularly successful in helping boys to achieve well.

Pupils have a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe and healthy; they know how to deal with instances of unkind behaviour and the importance of a balanced diet, although some do not always exercise healthy eating options. There is a very strong sense of community and pupils are proud of their school. They get on

well with each other and behaviour is good. Pupils note that instances of poor behaviour and occasional bullying are dealt with very well by staff.

Pupils' spiritual development is excellent and they are confident in expressing their feelings and exploring creative dimensions in learning. This was demonstrated very well by a small group of pupils in 'Room 13' who were explaining to the artist in residence the varied dimensions of Roman life that they would like to explore in a video animation. Pupils enjoy their lessons; as one remarked, 'Teachers don't just tell you things, they explain them.'

Attendance is satisfactory, although there are a small minority of pupils who do not arrive in school on time.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	2
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
Pupils' attendance and punctuality	3
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

The quality of the school's work

Teaching and learning are good overall, with some that is outstanding. Detailed planning, the sharing of pupils' ideas, accurate assessment of progress and the effective use of teaching assistants all contribute to pupils making good progress. There is a minority of teaching that is satisfactory, but not sharp enough to challenge pupils thoroughly. This is because activities are not always well matched to the abilities of pupils, especially those who learn quickly. Some questioning is probing and gets pupils to think hard, but this is not the case in all lessons.

Assessment is much improved from the last inspection and the school has detailed systems to track pupils' progress and to set targets for them. These targets are used effectively by staff at individual, group and whole-class or year group levels, and form an important part of the regular pupils' progress meetings and staff performance reviews. Pupils are effectively encouraged to assess their own work

¹ Grades for attainment are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; 4 is low

using 'success criteria' identified at the start of lessons. This is helping them to develop their critical thinking skills and to see how a piece of work can be improved. Pupils have targets to aim for, but not all of them understand what they need to do to achieve them. Marking of work is good in many classes, but not yet consistent in all of them.

The curriculum is well designed to promote key skills, such as reading and writing. The creative dimension is very strong, which pupils enjoy very much. Staff are working to improve investigative skills in subjects such as science and mathematics. There are high quality and varied opportunities to support and guide pupils, such as Room 13, and the 'Vibe', a place where individual pupils can talk to an adult. These make a major contribution to pupils' well-being and achievement, resulting in pupils feeling cared for and nurtured, and confident in tackling new things.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

High quality teaching and purposeful learning	2
Effective assessment and academic guidance	2
An appropriate curriculum which meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, provision through partnership with other organisations	2
Support, guidance and care	1

How effective are leadership and management?

Senior leaders and subject leaders have got to grips with checking how well the school is doing in a systematic way. As a result, they have a good understanding of what needs to be improved and take effective action. The school improvement plan details key tasks to be done to develop important areas such as literacy, numeracy and assessment, and is a very helpful management tool. A good example of its effectiveness is the action taken to improve writing skills last year, which paid off well; the quality of writing was a weakness at the last inspection but is now close to average, especially for boys.

Senior leaders' monitoring of lessons is very helpful in improving teaching. For example, it has resulted in all lessons having very clear learning outcomes and effective use of ICT to support learning. However, it is not focused sharply enough on what pupils are learning and whether this is good enough.

The school has first-class links with other agencies and schools that make a big difference to pupils' learning and well-being. For instance, the work with local primary schools on delivering a creative curriculum meets pupils' needs very well, as they can recognise, and enjoy, the links between subjects. Strong links with the local authority have helped to bring about improvements to pupils' learning and achievement, through making use of advice and support on areas such as assessment practice and curriculum planning. The school is effective in helping pupils see the importance of the local and wider community in their growth as young citizens.

The governing body supports the school well in its day-to-day work and in agreeing its long-term plans. It is not yet good enough at challenging it to do better still and to monitor the impact of its plans for improvement. This is because there are no organised systems to enable all governors to find out for themselves about the work of the school and how well it is meeting pupils' needs.

The school deploys resources effectively and the budget is managed prudently. It makes good use of additional sources of funding to support its work, such as that from Creative Partnerships. The school provides good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

Monitoring, evaluating and planning for improvement to outcomes for pupils	2
Promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination	2
Ensuring that safeguarding procedures are effective	2
Ensuring that the governing body provides effective challenge and support so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities are met	3
Promoting the school's relationship with parents and carers, including their involvement in decision making about matters relating to learning and well-being	2
Developing partnerships with other providers, organisations and services	1
Ensuring the school contributes to community cohesion	2
Deploying resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

Only 22 questionnaires were returned to the inspection team. Most of the few respondents were very positive about the school, particularly in the areas of their children's enjoyment of school, and leadership. A very small number of parents expressed concern about behaviour among older pupils. The inspection team talked to pupils about this, and observed consistently good behaviour in lessons and around the school. No concern was expressed by the pupils, and they were well behaved.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2006-7, 14% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2006-7, 46% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing for its pupils suitably. In 2006-7, 34% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2006-7, 6% of schools were judged inadequate.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
Achievement:	an overall measure of the pupils' success in their academic learning. The term combines attainment and progress. Pupils might make good progress, for example, but if their attainment remains low, inspectors may judge that their achievement is only satisfactory.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



1 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of West Rise Junior School, Eastbourne, BN23 7SL

Thank you very much for the warm welcome you gave to Mrs Coop and me when we visited your school recently. We really valued talking to you about your learning and life in school. We think that yours is a good and improving school because:

- You are making good progress and learning well, especially in writing.
- You have good attitudes to school and are very keen to contribute in lessons and in other activities, such as the Pupil Council or Room 13.
- Lessons are interesting and there are a lot of opportunities for you to learn in creative ways; you told us this and we agree.
- If you need extra help or support in your learning, or in helping you to feel better, it is available.
- You are looked after very well and you feel happy in school.
- The headteacher and other staff know the school well and what to do to help you improve your work.

We think that your school can be better still. We have asked your senior teachers to make sure that they take special care to check how well you are learning when they visit lessons. Many of your lessons are exciting and challenging; we have asked the staff to make sure that all your lessons are like this. Perhaps you have some thoughts about how this could be done which you can share with staff. Finally, we have asked the governors to get to know the school better so that they can help the staff make the school even more successful.

I hope that you continue to learn well and enjoy school. We certainly enjoyed our short time with you and wish you well in the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Chisnall
Her Majesty's Inspector

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