

Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115123
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	326128
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	72
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Graham Bannerman
Headteacher	Mrs Madeleine Matthews
Date of previous school inspection	10 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	The Street Woodham Walter Maldon Essex CM9 6RF
Telephone number	01245 223264

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	13–14 May 2009
Inspection number	326128

Fax number

01245 226810

Age group	4-11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an additional inspector.

Description of the school

Pupils come from the local village and other villages and towns in the surrounding area. They are mainly from White British backgrounds and a small number come from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average overall for a school of this size. It is above average in some year groups. The attainment on entry of children starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage is broadly average, although it varies considerably because of the small numbers in each group. The levels of pupil mobility are high, especially in Years 3 to 6. Recent staff changes have led to the development of a new senior leadership team. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and the Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The very many positive comments given by pupils and parents, for example, 'a wonderful school!' clearly show how highly this school is valued. They reflect accurately that it is indeed a good school. Aspects of its work are outstanding. Several parents spoken to during the inspection have chosen to send their children here because 'they benefit wonderfully from the caring, family-like environment'. This very supportive, caring ethos enables pupils to gain in self-confidence and to value and respect each other. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. They are eager to learn and their attendance is excellent. Older pupils look out for the younger ones to ensure that they are happy and enjoying school. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are keen to meet teachers' high expectations and to gain recognition, for example, through the 'WOW' reward scheme. Pupils are clearly proud of their school. They have a strong sense of belonging and contributing to the school and local communities. Their understanding of communities in other parts of the world is enhanced through their involvement in the Diocesan Africa project.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. It is excellent in the Early Years Foundation Stage and is built on successfully in Years 1 and 2. Assessments over the last three years show that the rate of progress slowed down considerably in Years 3 and 4, although this is now good as result of better teaching. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 make excellent progress as they respond enthusiastically to the challenges set by the consistently effective, often outstanding teaching. Standards of attainment vary considerably due to the small numbers of pupils in each year. They are usually well above average at the end of Year 2. They are above average overall at the end of Year 6. A high proportion of pupils taking the Year 6 tests join the school in Years 3 to 6. Pupils who find learning difficult benefit greatly from excellent support by teaching and support staff. They enjoy activities that are matched closely to their individual learning needs. This helps them to make outstanding progress towards their learning targets. Pupils from Traveller families are integrated very successfully and given good support to improve their key basic skills. They make good progress. Many parents are appreciative of the school involving them fully and keeping them well informed about their child's progress. This excellent partnership with parents helps support pupils in their learning.

Pupils succeed in many areas and value the outstanding range of learning activities. Teachers plan carefully to link subjects together in a cohesive and stimulating way. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons and the many opportunities to extend their key basic skills. For example, their involvement in such initiatives as the 'Forest School' project provides exciting, innovative ways to learn and develop an increasing understanding of environmental issues. The curriculum is enriched very successfully through an excellent range of school visits, journeys and extra-curricular clubs, some provided by local community organisations. Pupils have an excellent understanding of safe and healthy lifestyles and participate eagerly in a good range of sports.

The good leadership and management, as evident in the enthusiastic, motivational approach of the headteacher, focus consistently on improving the school. Her positive influence is valued highly by parents - 'she is a great leader ...very inspiring'. She manages her staff successfully to improve the quality of teaching and learning. These are now consistently good with some outstanding practice. She encourages and enables all staff and governors to contribute to an increasingly effective team approach. They have an accurate picture of how well the school is doing because of good procedures to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. These are used well to set attainment targets and identify and support any pupils who are not

maintaining the expected progress in English or mathematics. The headteacher and her newly established leadership team are beginning to extend these tracking and evaluation procedures, for example, in science. This is improving achievement, although the involvement of key staff in focusing rigorously on pupils' achievement is not consistently established. Therefore, despite its outstanding features, the school's capacity to improve is good rather than outstanding.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is outstanding. Children settle quickly and happily into Class 1. Very effective arrangements introduce them to school life and into a friendly, caring, learning atmosphere that is valued greatly by parents. One commented 'its caring ethos is manifest in every aspect of our child's school life'. Children enjoy an interesting, creative and very well organised range of learning activities that includes a very good balance between those that are directed by adults and those of their own choosing. There is a clear sense of purpose and no time is wasted. The very good teamwork between the teacher and teaching assistants ensures that they continuously assess and record how well each child is achieving. Staff share this information and use it very effectively to inform teaching. They check it carefully to ensure that each child makes good progress in all areas of learning. The excellent, enthusiastic teaching helps children to achieve outstandingly well. By the time they move into Year 1, they have skills that exceed those expected nationally in all areas of learning.

Children benefit greatly from an excellent outdoor area. It provides a stimulating learning environment. Careful planning ensures that it is used very effectively and is an integral part of daily learning. The excellent relationships that exist between the children and the adults who teach them encourage them to become increasingly independent. They are taught the skills to achieve this and are enthusiastic and eager to learn. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are excellent. The leader has a very clear understanding of what children of this age should be learning and has created an environment in which it can happen.

What the school should do to improve further

- Develop further the roles of staff with key responsibilities in checking how well pupils are achieving.
- Extend the good use of tracking procedures to ensure pupils' achievement is consistently good in all areas, particularly science.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good overall. Teachers have focused successfully, helped by excellent support from parents, on improving key literacy skills. This has raised standards in the last three years, particularly in Years 1 and 2, to well above average levels in reading and writing. A current focus on mathematics, particularly on pupils who are not making expected progress, is improving their achievement and raising standards. Consistently good teaching and the very effective use of support teachers are raising pupils' confidence in mathematics and improving their skills, knowledge and understanding. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average. Those in science are average and improving. Teachers are beginning to use assessments more effectively to ensure that pupils build consistently on prior learning. The increasingly effective use of laptops to support learning across many subjects is extending pupils' skills to above expected levels. The very good range of learning opportunities encourages pupils' involvement and

enables more able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents to extend their skills to a high standard, for example, in gymnastics.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

The high priority given to each individual encourages mutual respect and helps pupils grow in self-esteem to form excellent relationships. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. It is supported very effectively by strong links with the local church and a focus on different cultural experiences, for example, those of Greece and India. These increase their knowledge of people's lives in other communities. Pupils know how to ensure their own and others' safety and their behaviour is exemplary. Their awareness of healthy lifestyles means that the many sporting opportunities provided are extremely popular and very well attended. Pupils rate the school very highly and thoroughly enjoy school life, which is reflected in their high attendance rates. They develop a keen sense of responsibility, for example, using self-assessment increasingly to be more responsible for their own learning. The valuable work of the school council increases pupils' understanding of environmental issues. Pupils' preparation for the next stage of education is developed well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good overall and lessons are often outstanding. Planning is very thorough. Teachers are particularly successful in challenging pupils to apply and extend their skills and knowledge, for example, when requiring them to solve difficult mathematical problems. Teachers use interactive whiteboards effectively to hold pupils' interest and stimulate their learning. Their use of assessment information to match the work carefully to what pupils need and what they already know in literacy and numeracy is very successful. It is not so consistently used in some other subjects, for example, science. Teachers have high expectations, to which pupils readily respond, especially the manner in which they quickly and enthusiastically settle to the task. Some outstanding practice in marking pupils' work is raising standards, especially in English and mathematics.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The outstanding curriculum has the pupils' needs at its heart and contributes greatly to their personal development. It links subjects together successfully to provide a cohesive and balanced programme that is imaginative and develops a desire to learn. Pupils' enjoyment of the wide range of learning activities is a key factor in promoting their good achievement. Such themes as 'Wind in the Willows' and 'Africa' result in high quality work in a whole-school performance and art and design work that is attractively displayed around the school. The very successful use of visitors and a good range of day trips and residential experiences enhance pupils' creativity and their understanding of local and wider communities. The curriculum is enriched through a very good range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs, for example in music and sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Teachers and support staff provide high quality individual personal care and support. This is highly valued by parents and pupils. There are secure systems for ensuring pupils' safety and protection. Pupils say that they feel extremely safe and happy in school and any bullying or harassment is very rare. Teaching and support staff work very successfully together to ensure that pupils receive the support that they need, particularly those who find learning hard. Pupils, especially in Years 5 and 6, benefit from outstanding individual guidance to help them improve their skills, particularly in writing and mathematics. They have a clear understanding of how well they are attaining and what they need to improve in order to attain a higher level.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The enthusiastic and energetic leadership of the headteacher provides an excellent and purposeful direction to the work of the school. She works closely with her staff to check the progress of each pupil in English and mathematics. She has been particularly effective in improving teaching and establishing a strong team ethos and sense of community. Governors are supportive and increasingly involved in checking carefully how well the school is doing. The school makes an excellent contribution to wider community cohesion through very good links with the local community. A broader global perspective is promoted through links with a school in Kenya, including planned exchange visits by teachers. High priority is given to ensuring that all pupils are included fully in all aspects of the curriculum and supported to achieve well, particularly in English and mathematics. Staff with key responsibilities, some of whom are new to their posts, are beginning to check provision and achievement more rigorously. The school is on an upward curve. The headteacher, governors and staff have improved provision. As a result, standards are higher in English and mathematics, and improving in science. The school is effectively placed to improve further.

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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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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/or disabilities make progress	1

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	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 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?	1

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 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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

15 May 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Maldon,
CM9 6RF

Thank you for making me feel so welcome when I visited your school recently. I enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with your parents, you think that it is a good school, and I agree.

I was pleased to see how well you get on together and you are really proud of your school. Your behaviour is excellent and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how they are helping to improve the school. I would like to say a special thanks to the group of Year 6 pupils who, during the week of their national tests, told me about life at your school and how you care for each other and play well together.

You told me that you learn a lot in school and enjoy your work, especially the interesting themes and the good range of clubs. You are all making good progress in your lessons. This is because your teachers make lessons interesting and you try hard to do what your teachers ask. Mrs Matthews and her staff are trying to help you learn as well as possible and are keeping careful checks on your progress, especially in English and mathematics. I have asked them to check in more detail on some other subjects, for example, science. I have also asked the teachers who are responsible for particular subjects, to see where they can help you to achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping me to find out about your school and I hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Yours faithfully

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector