

Westbrooke School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	101488
Local Authority	Bexley
Inspection number	335727
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2010
Reporting inspector	Heather Yaxley HMI

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	32
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Pat Wade
Headteacher	Mrs Carol Hance
Date of previous school inspection	3 October 2006
School address	South Gypsy Road Welling Kent DA16 1JB
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors. She observed the school's work, scrutinised policies, pupils' work and the school's tracking data, met with pupils, staff and governors, considered the comments from 15 questionnaires from parents and carers, and others from pupils and staff. Approximately a quarter of the inspection time was spent looking directly at learning, which included observing six teachers during five lessons looking at pupils' past work and talking to pupils about their current work.

The inspector reviewed many aspects of the school's work. She looked in detail at the following:

- The strengths and developments in the curriculum.
- The suitability and effectiveness of policies, actions and practice relating to safeguarding, equality, partnerships and community involvement.
- The role of the governing body in driving school improvement and meeting its statutory responsibilities.

Information about the school

Westbrooke School admits pupils from across the borough who have a statement of special educational needs in relation to their behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Prior to admission, pupils have often been excluded from their local school or have previously attended a pupil referral unit. When the time comes to transfer to secondary education, most pupils go on to similar specialist provision. Pupils represent a range of social and cultural backgrounds. The majority of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

The school is registered to admit pupils from the age of five years but there have been no pupils of this age for some time and there are no five year olds waiting to be admitted. For this reason the Early Years Foundation Stage was not inspected at this time. Most of the current pupils are in Years 4, 5 and 6. At any one time the school has a very small proportion of girls on roll. There are currently no pupils looked after by the local authority.

In September 2009, the school entered into a soft federation arrangement together with two pupil referral units and a secondary school for pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The federation, The Bexley Behaviour Federation, has a separate executive headteacher.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

To say that Westbrooke's overall effectiveness is satisfactory is true but it is not the whole story. For example, pupils make good progress from their starting points and quickly start to make up for lost learning. This happens because pupils' behaviour improves considerably as they spend more time at the school. This, together with the high importance that the staff place on learning, helps pupils to focus on their work as well as their behaviour. Furthermore, the way in which the school works collaboratively with pupils' families is outstanding because staff often go the extra mile to ensure that pupils' emotional and social needs are addressed.

Nevertheless, there are aspects of the school's work that are not as well planned or scrutinised and this means that some things have not moved forward as fast as they might. Governors, for example, meet their statutory responsibilities and are strong advocates for the school but they do not always add sufficient rigour to their policies and monitoring activities. Similarly, the school's senior leaders are able to talk about what they do but evidence to show the impact of their actions is not always sufficient to ensure that their evaluations are accurate. Over the past 18 months however, it is clear that self-evaluation has improved, particularly in relation to the use of assessment data and the suitability of the curriculum. These developments demonstrate that the school has the necessary capacity to improve further. Suitable actions have been taken to identify and address weaknesses. Accordingly, pupils' reading has improved and the curriculum has been overhauled.

Weaknesses in planning extend also to pupils' behaviour plans and targets, leading to missed opportunities to involve pupils more fully in their own learning and behaviour. There is an over-reliance on informal approaches to monitor how well pupils are doing and targets for learning and behaviour are not always well thought through. As a result, there is too much inconsistency in the quality of pupils' targets, how the targets are linked to the objectives in pupils' statements of special educational needs and how they are monitored over time. Attendance rates are too low.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership, management and governance by:
 - ensuring senior school leaders and governors formalise action plans with clear success criteria that are specifically linked to the difference that actions will make to outcomes for the pupils
 - ensuring senior leaders and governors formalise procedures and practices for

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monitoring the quality of the provision, particularly for teaching

- making sure governors are more challenging of the school's work.
- Improve the curriculum by focusing policies, plans and schemes of work on the relevant balance of skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils will acquire so that:
 - teachers plan activities in lessons more specifically for the needs of different groups of pupils
 - pupils have sufficient opportunities to transfer skills across different subjects of the curriculum.
- Devise and implement clear individual plans for improving pupils' behaviour.
- Improve pupils' attendance so that rates of attendance are broadly in line with national averages for mainstream pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils see themselves as learners. But not only that, pupils respect the rules and they are able to explain how their behaviour sometimes gets in the way of their learning and the work of others. This means that when disruption occurs in class, most pupils are able to carry on with what they are doing and focus on the teacher. On the playground, pupils generally play cooperatively together at ball games or on the climbing frames. They respond well to opportunities from adults at these times. Their behaviour on educational activities off site is generally very good. They know what is right and what is wrong and even when things become difficult pupils have the confidence to start again and this is because they feel very safe and secure with the adults supporting them.

It is no surprise then, that by the time they transfer to secondary education most pupils have made good progress from their individual starting points. On admission to the school attainment is often low compared to standards expected for their age, but as pupils' behaviour improves they start to make up the gap because their learning accelerates. Standards are still low when they move on but most pupils make two National Curriculum levels progress between Key Stages 1 and 2 in reading, writing and mathematics and some do even better than this. Most progress is made in reading, linked to changes in teaching strategies. Using tracking data, staff have identified that a dip in rates of progress in writing and mathematics is linked to curricular arrangements for these subjects and changes have been made recently to address these findings. Similarly, the school has quite rightly identified that poor attendance is closely matched to reduced rates of academic progress. Overall, attendance rates are too low.

Pupils are not always actively involved in their learning, in school improvement or within the wider community. This is because opportunities for self-assessment, responding to marking, to have a say, take responsibility and show initiative, are not well thought through by all staff. Nevertheless, good examples exist, for example, pupils in Yellow class respond well to individual targets for writing, helping them to focus on what they need to do in order to improve their work. The quality of pupils' work in books varies across the school, with some taking much more pride in their work than others. The

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work of the younger pupils is often better presented than that of older pupils.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

A lack of sufficient formal monitoring by the senior team makes it difficult to judge the quality of teaching. Pupils make good progress over time and good teaching was seen during this inspection. But a range of teaching quality is also evident, particularly linked to the effectiveness of teachers' lesson plans, their marking of work and feedback to pupils. Pupils do best when the learning activities are specifically planned for different abilities, needs and interests, often linked to what each individual will do and learn in a lesson. For example, in Orange class, pupils were observed to make good gains in their personal skills and mathematical understanding because the plans enabled each adult in the room to work purposefully with individual pupils and groups.

Weaknesses in teachers' plans are linked to inconsistencies within curriculum plans. This is partly to do with a period of transition from the previous approach to that used from the beginning of this academic year. The rationale for the change is soundly based on evaluations of what was working well, what could be done better and how well pupils

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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engaged and made progress in lessons. But there are some teething troubles with the new curriculum because plans are not sufficiently clear about the knowledge, skills and understanding that will be taught and the different levels that are expected to be achieved by different groups. Strength lies in both past and present opportunities that the curriculum gives pupils for cultural and spiritual development. For example, pupils say that they enjoy and learned a lot from visits such as to Hever and Rochester Castles. The care, guidance and support that pupils and their families get from staff are a clear strength of the school. Pastoral support is very strong and this makes a significant contribution to pupils' feeling of safety, security, confidence and self-worth. Similarly, approaches to health and safety are robust. However, the support for pupils to become more independent, reflective and active in their learning is not always well thought through. Adults sometimes do too much without taking the time to assess the quality of what pupils can do for themselves. In addition, plans for developing individual pupils' behaviour are not formally in place and opportunities are missed for pupils to play an active part in their own education. For example, pupils do not attend their annual reviews. Nevertheless, pupils and their families value highly the support and encouragement that the school gives them, as evidenced in an overwhelming support voiced through the pre-inspection questionnaires.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The effectiveness of the different aspects of leadership and management is a mixed bag of strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand an overwhelming commitment and in-depth understanding of the needs of the pupils and their families and on the other, although satisfactory, procedures and practices for monitoring and improvement planning rely on too much informality. This is why the school can demonstrate exemplary elements of working in partnership with pupils' families but, at the same time, cannot always evidence the impact of its work in other areas such as the quality of teaching, the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures and the promotion of community cohesion. In addition, the governing body is not playing its part as effectively as it should. There is a lack of in-depth challenge to the school, as well as a lack of attention to detail regarding monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of policies and the quality of the school's work.

Part of the problem for leaders, managers and governors is the lack of an in-depth

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exploration of the breadth of some important aspects of their work. Model policies have been adopted without tailoring them to the particular challenges faced by their particular pupils and circumstances. For example, while all safeguarding procedures are secure and meet the current government requirements, broader aspects that are pertinent to the particular needs of these pupils in this particular community have not been fully considered. This applies equally to the school's policies and plans to promote cohesion in the community. This is compounded by a lack of formality for planning and monitoring school improvement. Professional debate does not always lead to a clear strategic approach or a robust framework of accountability and responsibility. Good practice exists, for example, in the use of targets with younger pupils and some teachers plan very effectively for different groups of pupils. But the good practice is not sufficiently widespread or shared.

Nevertheless, within this mixed picture there is a much more effective use of self-evaluation by the headteacher and deputy headteacher since the last inspection. Their responses to the challenges provided by the School Improvement Partner have clearly made a difference. In particular, the tracking of pupils' progress is much improved, successfully linking pupils' progress with the quality of the curriculum. For example, changes to the curriculum came out of findings that pupils' behaviour out of school was often better than in the classroom, that setting for mathematics was not helping all pupils to succeed, and that the quality of writing, having improved, then tailed off. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have brought staff along a successful journey for assessing and tracking pupils' progress in English, mathematics and some areas of behavioural skill. Other subjects are not yet tracked and this is identified as their next priority. Indications from past successes, which have led to improved pupils' progress, demonstrate that the school has established a sound base from which to improve further, ensuring that pupils have good equal opportunities to learn and to make progress in their behaviour and academic development.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3
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Views of parents and carers

Approximately half of the pupils' families responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Responses demonstrate that the vast majority of families who responded value highly the support that they get for their children, and their confidence in the school is clear. No particular issues were raised for further investigation.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Westbrooke School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 15 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 32 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	9	60	6	40	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	11	73	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	9	60	6	40	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	10	67	3	20	1	7	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	10	67	5	33	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	9	60	5	33	1	7	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	8	53	7	47	0	0	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	10	67	4	27	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	11	73	3	20	1	7	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	11	73	3	20	1	7	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	9	60	6	40	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	12	80	3	20	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	11	73	3	20	1	7	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



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31 January 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Westbrooke School, Welling, Kent DA16 1JB

I am writing to let you know about the things that I found out about your school when I inspected it recently and the judgements that I made. It was very clear to me that you value the support that the staff give you very much. You told me that this helps your behaviour and your work to improve and I agree with you because I know that you make good progress. Your families told me the same and please pass on my thanks to them for filling in the questionnaire.

Mrs Hance, the staff and the governors provide you with a satisfactory standard of education. They do some things better than others and sometimes they do not put enough detail into things. For example, the staff work very well with your families but the way that staff plan the curriculum and lessons is not always detailed enough. I have asked the staff to look more carefully at how they plan your lessons so that you can make even better progress. I have also asked them to make a special behaviour plan for each of you and to help some of you improve your attendance. I have asked the governors of your school to ask more questions about how well they are doing and how your learning could be improved.

Thank you for showing me your work and talking to me. A special thank you to those who sat with me at lunchtimes and those who came to talk to me in my room and on the playground. It was a pleasure to come to inspect your school and to see how hard you are working. I wish you well for all that you hope for yourselves in the future.

Thank you again.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley

Her Majesty's Inspector

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