

Westbrooke School

South Gypsy Road, Welling, Kent, DA16 1JB

Inspection dates 16–17 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching and, as a result, pupils' progress is uneven across the school.
- Pupils' attainment in writing at end of Key Stage 1 is still too low. This is because development of writing skills is not systematic.
- Too few pupils make good progress in writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2. This is because they do not practise their skills enough in other subjects.
- Pupils who recently joined the school, especially in Years 3 and 4, make very slow progress in their reading because phonics (linking letters with the sounds they make) teaching at Key Stage 2 is not well planned.
- Pupils are not always encouraged to work on their own and develop investigative skills without the help of adults and this slows their learning.
- Teachers do not use skilful questioning often enough to check pupils' understanding of their work and to move more-able pupils quickly on as soon as they are ready.
- Leaders of subjects are not sufficiently trained to be able to check closely and build on the progress of pupils in their subjects.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, is the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement in the last two years. The 'hard' federation has strengthened the governing body.
- The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress from low starting points is on an upward trajectory. As a result, current school data show that almost all pupils in Year 6 attained at least a Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics this year.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance is improving and is now above average.
- School's management of behaviour is good so all pupils, including those on the autistic spectrum and those with emotional and social and behavioural difficulties, behave well in lessons and in the playground.
- Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding in Year 6 make good progress aided by the work of the speech, language and communication therapists engaged by the school.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed five lessons, all of which were seen with the headteacher. In addition, the inspector made short visits to other lessons, looked at pupils' work and heard pupils read.
- Meetings were held with staff, pupils, two members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Meetings were also held with six parents individually.
- The inspector took account of 23 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a range of documentation including nationally published assessment data and the school's own data, local authority reports, the school's checks on how well it is doing, improvement plans, safeguarding policies, and records and documents relating to the management of teachers' performance.

Inspection team

Justina Ilochi, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a small special school with very few girls.
- Most pupils come from White British backgrounds, with a very few from Black African heritage.
- About two thirds of pupils are eligible for additional funding through the pupil premium. In this school, this extra government funding currently applies only to pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils who are looked after by the local authority.
- All pupils have a statement of special education needs. The school provides mostly for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) and pupils on the autistic spectrum. About 80% of pupils also have speech, language and communication difficulties.
- More than half of pupils joined the school at times other than in Year 1. All pupils in Year 4 and some in Year 3 joined the school this year.
- The school has undergone major changes since the previous inspection. It is now part of a 'hard' federation of three schools called New Horizons Federation with a focus on pupils with challenging behaviours. The headteacher was appointed in September 2011 and more than half the teachers, including subject leaders, are new in post. The Chair of the Governing Body is also the Chair of New Horizons Federations.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make teaching consistently at least good by making sure that:
 - teachers use well-planned questions to check pupils' understanding at various times during a lesson and move more-able pupils on as soon as they are ready
 - teachers give more opportunities to pupils to work on their own without the support of adults.
- Increase the rates of progress of pupils to be at least good by ensuring that:
 - teachers teach phonics more systematically for pupils who join the school in Key Stage 2, especially in Years 3 and 4
 - teachers plan the development of writing skills systematically from Year 1
 - pupils have enough opportunities to use their writing and mathematical skills in other subjects other than mathematics or English.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by making sure that:
 - the new leaders of subjects are sufficiently trained to be able to check closely the progress of pupils in their subjects.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Attainment requires improvement because end of Key Stage 1 writing is still below the national average and has been so for the last three years. Current school information shows that no pupil will reach the expected national average this year in writing at Key Stage 1.
- Not enough pupils made more than expected progress. In Year 6, for example, not enough pupils made more than expected rates of progress in writing and mathematics compared to reading. This directly reflects the variable quality of teaching in the school.
- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 made very slow progress in reading this year. This is because teachers missed opportunities to close reading gaps in pupils' knowledge through teaching phonics (sounds that letters make) more systematically. However, the development of phonics for six-year-olds in Year 1 is good and, compared to last year phonics testing results, was above average.
- The proportion of pupils making at least expected progress from low starting points is on an upward trajectory. As a result, current school data show that almost all pupils in Year 6 attained at least a Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics this year. This good achievement is better than for the last two years. It is not yet the case for all year groups or sustained over time.
- A few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding, made similar progress and matched the attainment in reading, writing and mathematics of their peers in the school this year. Last year, pupils on free school meals were two terms behind their peers in reading and mathematics, but this year the gap has closed.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because its quality is still too inconsistent, despite the hard work of the headteacher. As a result, pupils' attainment as seen in their books was sometimes too low and required improvement.
- Teachers and teaching assistants do not encourage pupils to work on their own and develop investigative skills without the help of adults and this slows their learning. For example, in some lessons, adults did not pause long enough when questions were asked, for pupils to reflect deeply before giving answers.
- Teaching of writing, especially in Key Stage 1, requires improvement because teachers do not plan the development of writing skills systematically enough from Year 1. Work in books showed that handwriting of pupils in Years 1 and 2 was not developing well enough.
- Teaching does not always challenge more-able pupils enough, so too few of them at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are attaining higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teachers are not using skilful questioning skills to check progress and to move more-able pupils quickly on when they are ready.
- The teaching of mathematics is improving, but the range of opportunities given to pupils to practise their problem-solving skills in real-life situations is limited. For example, a lesson on coordinates missed several opportunities for pupils to learn about how to apply it to real life.
- The quality of marking and written feedback is good and has improved since the previous inspection. All pupils' work in English and mathematics is marked and comments are helpful for planning next steps in teaching. This has helped to improve pupils' pride in their work and helped to support the school's high expectations of behaviour. Thus, behaviour in lessons is consistently good.
- Reading is increasingly well taught, particularly in Key Stage 1. Staff are skilled in helping pupils to become familiar with phonics and to develop high levels of confidence as readers. The phonics screening check results for 2013 show a substantial improvement from last year when no pupils did the test.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they love their school. They are polite, respectful to each other and adults, and want to do their best. Pupils form excellent working relationships with the staff.
- Those who find it difficult to behave consistently well on entry to school make good progress in managing their own behaviour. This is because the school provides very clear guidance to staff, who are highly skilled at motivating pupils and managing their behaviour positively. Well designed behaviour action plans enable pupils to do their best to improve and provide them with the help to do so.
- Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Most pupils have very challenging behaviours caused by emotional, social and behavioural difficulties associated with their special educational needs. Staff are adept at managing these behaviours and removing obstacles to learning for pupils. Hence, pupils engage well with learning.
- All parents who spoke with the inspector agreed that their children are kept safe. They are delighted with how happy their children are to come to school, and this is reflected in the improving attendance of the last two years. Currently, attendance is above average.
- Pupils get on well with each other, especially in the playground where most boys enjoy a harmonious game of football. They understand the meaning of bullying because the school working closely with several external agencies keeps a good focus on appropriate behaviour. As a result, fixed-term exclusions have reduced drastically and there has been only one fixed-term exclusion this year.
- Non-academic individual targets set for pupils by their teachers to improve life skills, such as communication and social skills, have had a positive impact on pupils, especially pupils on the autistic spectrum. The self-confidence of these pupils grows as they proceed through the school and become increasingly independent. For example, in music assembly, pupils, including those on the autistic spectrum, were confident enough and volunteered to present dance steps to an audience of staff and pupils.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are consistently good in almost all lessons and this plays a significant part in their improving achievement.
- Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and use a common system which pupils fondly called 'golden time' that rewards pupils who try hard to produce their best efforts and addresses the occasional 'off task' behaviour. Parents who spoke to the inspector confirmed the school's behaviour management system has helped them to manage some challenging behaviour of their children at home.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher, with the support of the governing body, is the driving force behind the school's continuing improvement in the last two years. The school's systems for managing staff performance are robust and staff are held to account for improving the quality of their teaching. This has led to the elimination of inadequate teaching.
- Since his appointment and the strengthening of the collaborative work within the 'hard' federation, the behaviour of pupils has improved rapidly, the achievement of pupils in English and mathematics has risen and the attendance of pupils has improved and is currently above the national average.
- The school's knowledge of its strengths and weaknesses is good and there is a suitably focused action plan to tackle areas requiring improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has benefited from a new structure within a 'hard' federation arrangement with two other schools. As a result of the sharing of expertise, the governing body has been strengthened in its role to support and hold the school to account. This was an area for improvement in the previous inspection.
- Training opportunities for staff are linked to the management of their performance and are rapidly improving the quality of teaching and the behaviour of pupils from the very low baseline

of the past three years. For example, the recent focus of training on consistent behaviour strategies is already having a positive impact. As a result, progress is improving steadily and the capacity for continued improvement is secure. However, new leaders of subjects are not sufficiently trained yet to be able to check closely the progress of pupils in their subjects.

- The school understands its pupils and promotes equal opportunities and tackles discrimination well. Pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding are well identified in all year groups and their progress is closely monitored and tracked. For example, thorough assessment by the speech, language and communication therapist has identified that pupils eligible for the pupil premium funding have underlying barriers to learning, such as speech, language and communication difficulties, that are responsible for their underperformance. This is already having a positive impact on pupils on free school meals because they have grown in confidence and their communication skills are developing well.
- Processes for checking pupils' progress are rigorous, robust and accurate. They have been developed in the last year and are embedding well. Assessment information is updated regularly, checked and used for planning interventions that meet the needs of pupils.
- The school engages well with parents. Parents have ample opportunities to discuss any concerns because of the school's open-door policy. They are invited frequently through letters home to support the school's behaviour policy and to attend meetings to discuss their children's' learning. As one parent summed up, 'School gives rewards frequently and everyday as a parent you get a green letter home if your child is good. These good incentives have improved the behaviour of my son.'
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the particular needs of pupils with a range of challenging behaviours, because it focuses on a good range of well organised topic weeks that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A broad range of educational visits and visitors gives pupils opportunities to reflect on social and moral issues and a sound awareness of a range of faiths and cultures. Consequently, pupils enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is good.
- Procedures for dealing with attendance are having a positive effect. The school's family support officer works hard to ensure that families are well supported when their children are transferring from other schools. Consequently, pupils settle down quickly to the school's life and are happy. Attendance rates rose this year in almost all year groups.
- The local authority played a very important role in the conception of the 'hard' federation. The school has welcomed and worked in a very positive way with the local authority and the high-quality expertise and support it has received. The school particularly valued the reviews that followed its previous inspection which were effective in helping sharpen its focus on what needed to be done.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has made a strong contribution to the improving picture of the school. It has been effective, especially in the appointment of a new headteacher and the strengthening of the collaboration work within the new 'hard' federation. It has also overseen the appointment of new subject leaders and teachers for the school. Key members of the governing body work across the federation and have been well trained. They know what the school is doing well and where it could do better, because they are involved in the checks the school is making on how well it is doing. The governors have an insightful understanding of information on pupils' progress, and use it to make comparisons with national expectations. For example, governors know that the school's funds are managed well. They check the use of the pupil premium funding and are rightly proud of its impact on this group's achievement this year. Governors are placing more emphasis on the school's evaluation of teaching and its management of staff performance in relation to pay progression. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet statutory requirements and that equal opportunity is promoted well.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	101488
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	400481

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	29
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Corine Botten
Headteacher	Phill Collins
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 January 2010
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