

Willesborough Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118370
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	326813
Inspection dates	19–20 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Kathryn Taylor

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	347
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	James Mitchell
Headteacher	Jan Parsons
Date of previous school inspection	12 July 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Church Road Willesborough Ashford TN24 0JZ
Telephone number	01233 624165
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Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a large school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average. Although an above average proportion of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds, relatively few are from homes where English is not the first language. Fewer pupils than average are eligible for free school meals. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Reception Year.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Willesborough Infant School is a good school. It has forged strong links with other schools to share and learn from best practice and has improved since its last inspection. As a result, achievement has improved, standards have risen and leadership is shared more widely.

Standards at the end of Year 2 were above the national average in 2008 and more pupils than in previous years reached the higher National Curriculum levels. This improvement in standards in Year 2 is likely to be maintained this year. Standards in writing are not quite as high as those in mathematics and reading, therefore the school has taken decisive steps to improve writing, for example by increasing the use of role-play to develop pupils' ideas and by providing more opportunities for writing across different subjects. Early indications suggest this is having a positive impact on improving standards.

Although teaching and learning are not yet consistently good in all classes, pupils make good overall progress. Several factors contribute to their good achievement. These include pupils' good attitudes to learning, leaders' robust use of assessments to identify pupils who need further challenge or support to stay on track, and a large increase in the number of interventions to extend some pupils and help others to catch up. Pupils who need extra support to make good progress, and those who may be in danger of falling behind because of the relative weaknesses in some day-to-day teaching, quickly improve, owing to these interventions by the school.

Inspectors agree with senior leaders that teaching and learning, although improved, are satisfactory overall. Senior leaders place a strong emphasis on strengthening teaching and have invested a lot of time and training in developing teaching skills. Teaching remains only satisfactory, at least in part because of the impact of fairly high staff turnover, including some temporary teachers in post. General strengths in teaching across classes include teachers' classroom organisation, relationships with pupils, and the fact that staff plan interesting activities and mark pupils' work regularly. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory rather than good, this is most often because tasks are not sufficiently matched to the full range of abilities. Work is therefore too hard for some pupils and not always challenging enough for the more able. Questioning is also not always skilled enough to check all groups of pupils' understanding and to extend their thinking.

Pupils' personal development and well-being and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. They work well together and are polite and very friendly. They told inspectors how much they enjoy school and being with their friends and teachers.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. The strong focus on improving provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage means this is now good. Work is in progress to strengthen the curriculum in Years 1 and 2 to make it more creative, skills-based and enjoyable. Care, guidance and support are good. Pupils are well cared for and have an increasingly good understanding of how they can improve their work and learning. The school works well with parents and external agencies to promote pupils' well-being. The majority of parents are very satisfied with the school.

Good leadership ensures that the school has good capacity to continue to improve. Monitoring of lessons occurs frequently. However, the school's monitoring records show that the evaluation of lessons and pupils' work tends to focus more on assessing teaching and consistency in

provision than on evaluating the precise impact on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school has recently started to make improvements to the way that it assesses children's attainments when they join the school. These show that the skills of children who joined Reception this year are typical of their age, with strengths in their attitudes to learning. Good induction arrangements help children to settle in quickly and develop friendships and good behaviour. Children are well cared for, eager to participate and confident in discussing their learning.

Good teaching ensures children achieve well and that standards when they enter Year 1 are above average. One exception is in writing, where standards are average. Teachers and support staff have a good understanding of how young children learn. They provide the right balance of teaching basic skills, through activities led by teachers and those that children can choose for themselves. Staff encourage children to become independent learners. A good example was observed by inspectors when children were invited to choose their activity and discuss this with their 'thinking partners' before carrying out their activities. Later, when children animatedly reviewed their learning, the teacher very skilfully used her observations of children's independent work to extend their learning.

Outdoor facilities are beginning to provide exciting opportunities. Although free-flow access between indoors and outside is not yet available to all children, staff ensure existing outdoor spaces are used well. Although fairly new in post, the Early Years manager provides good leadership. She has made effective use of external support and advice to develop greater consistency in practice. She has established better systems to assess children's attainment on entry and track their progress throughout the year. She rightly recognises the need to continue to strengthen these assessments, involving parents more fully in that process, so as to bring about further improvements.

What the school should do to improve further

- increase the amount of good teaching through developing questioning skills and more effective planning and teaching of lessons that meet the needs of all ability groups
- place greater emphasis on evaluating the impact of provision on the learning and progress of different groups of pupils
- strengthen assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage, involving parents more fully in the process.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Improvements to the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage mean that children make good progress across all the areas of learning. As a result, standards on entry to Year 1 are improving and were above average in 2008.

Standards at the end of Year 2 have generally been average since the last inspection. They improved in 2008 and were above average in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils also reached above average standards in science. The assessments for pupils currently in Year 2 indicate that overall standards will be above average at the end of the current academic year.

This represents good progress from their broadly average starting points. Pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, make good progress over time. Although pupils' progress is not always consistent in every class, it has improved in recent times. This is because there is now more good teaching in lessons and because the school has extended the number of intervention programmes to accelerate the progress of those who are at risk of falling behind. Pupils from minority ethnic groups attain similar standards to their peers.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' thorough enjoyment of school is reflected in their good attitudes and behaviour. They say bullying is not a problem and that adults deal with any inappropriate behaviour quickly and fairly. Good gains in their spiritual, moral and social development enable pupils to develop self-esteem, appreciate the needs and achievements of others and to show care and consideration. Pupils learn about cultural tradition and religions. They have a satisfactory understanding of life in multicultural British society.

Pupils contribute well to the school and local communities. They enjoy taking responsibility, for example as playground buddies. The school council makes a good contribution to school life, and, along with circle time, ensures pupils' views are well represented. Raising money for charities gives pupils a good understanding of wider social and economic issues and those less fortunate than themselves. Many opportunities to work in pairs and groups, together with good progress pupils demonstrate in basic skills, means pupils are well prepared for junior school by the time they leave. Work related to gaining the Healthy Schools award has helped pupils develop a good understanding of the need for safety, exercise and healthy eating. Attendance is satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved since the last inspection. There is an increasing amount of good teaching across all year groups, but not yet enough to ensure that pupils' day-to-day learning in all lessons is consistently good. Most teachers manage their pupils well. They identify clear learning intentions for lessons that are then shared with pupil, so that they understand what they are meant to be learning. Teachers use information and communication technology effectively and enable children to capture their learning and record work in different ways.

In the better lessons, teachers manage pupils particularly well, proceed at a good pace and often fire pupils' imagination, stimulating learning at a good pace. In the satisfactory lessons, the pace is sometimes slower, teachers tend to use a limited range of questions and tasks are not always well matched to the full range of abilities.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum has a strong focus on developing the basic skills and includes a large number of interventions that help to raise attainment of the more able pupils and those who need extra help to catch up. A current school priority is to develop greater creativity in the wider curriculum

and to ensure that it makes better links between subjects. There are early signs that this approach is having a positive impact on pupils' engagement and independent learning. However, it has not been in place long enough to enable its impact on improving standards and progress across a range of subjects to be evaluated. A good range of after-school activities for pupils in Years 1 and 2, along with themed events, visits and visitors to school, make a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Parents are very happy with the good pastoral support children receive. As one wrote, 'We are very happy that we made the right choice in sending our child here. We appreciate the help and support given to him by the school.' Pupils are safe, well known by adults in school, and are confident that staff will respond quickly to any problems. Child protection and other arrangements to safeguard pupils are robust and meet government requirements. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, together with other vulnerable pupils, are supported well, both personally and academically. Good links with a wide range of external agencies support the school to achieve this.

Academic guidance is good. Effective use is made of assessments to track pupils' progress and these help plan future learning and interventions. This has had a good impact on raising standards and achievement. Teachers regularly set individual targets for pupils. Additionally, pupils are increasingly being taught the skills to enable them to evaluate their own performance and shape their learning, although as yet this practice is not wholly embedded across the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction and ensures that the commitment to improvement and achieving the school's aims is a shared one with the staff. Despite a high turnover of staff, the headteacher, with good support from the deputy head and other senior leaders, has established a caring and inclusive ethos. Improvements have been made on many fronts, including teaching and learning, the curriculum and attendance. As such, expectations of what pupils can achieve have risen and challenging targets have been set and met. However, the school is not complacent and is aware there is more to be done to raise attainment further and to provide consistently good teaching and learning.

The school development plan is an effective tool to move the school forward. The school is developing the expertise of middle leaders to enable them to play a full part in realising the school's priorities. Governors are very supportive of the school, although many are newly appointed, under the good leadership of a recently elected chair of governor. Governors play a full part in strategic and financial planning and have become increasingly purposeful in their role as 'critical friends' in challenging the school to do its best for all in its care.

The school has an accurate view of its relative strengths and areas for further development. However, monitoring and evaluation have focused rather more on provision and establishing a common set of procedures than on evaluating their impact on different groups of pupils. In addition, the organisation of some pupils' work in folders makes it difficult to check their week-by-week or term-by-term progress. The school has a clear understanding of the nature of its community and makes a satisfactory contribution to community cohesion. While more

activities are planned, an evaluation of the impact of this aspect of work has yet to be undertaken.

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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?	2
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?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

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	2

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	2

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?	2

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	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

20 May 2009

Dear Children

Inspection of Willesborough Infant School, Ashford TN24 0JZ

Thank you very much for making us welcome when we visited your school. This letter is to tell you about our findings. We found that Willesborough Infants is a good school. It was good to see how much you enjoy your work and your learning. We noticed that you enjoy chatting to visitors and that you behave well and work and play together happily.

When we visited your classes, we noticed that the staff plan lots of interesting things for you to do and learn. You also have regular opportunities to learn from planned trips and visitors to the school. The staff look after you well. They listen to you and take notice of what you say. You have a good understanding of how to keep safe and told us that staff help you if you have any problems. We enjoyed seeing you running around and playing games at breaktimes. You help the staff to make sure the school runs smoothly. Your headteacher and staff help you to make good progress. They are working hard to make improvements to your school. We have asked them to work with your parents and carers to find out more about how much you already know when you first start school. We have also asked them to check your learning in books and lessons really carefully to see how well you are doing, and to make sure that all your lessons help you to learn well all the time.

You can help by doing your best and continuing to take good care of each other, so that your school continues to be a happy place.

Yours faithfully

Kathryn Taylor

Lead inspector