

Westlands First School

Farmers Way, Westlands, Droitwich, Worcestershire WR9 9EQ

Inspection dates

15–16 November 2017

Overall effectiveness	Requires improvement
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Requires improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teachers' planning typically does not take full account of the range of pupils' prior understanding and skills.
- Teachers often do not set tasks which are demanding enough for some pupils in the class, especially the most able. Additional activities for pupils who finish their work sometimes do not provide a new challenge.
- At key stage 2, pupils rarely write at sufficient depth. Pupils' work often shows that errors recur.
- The outdoor learning areas for children in the early years are underdeveloped, and do not contribute enough to their learning.
- Staff working in the Nursery Year and the Reception Year do not share all their expertise or take a consistent approach to assessment.
- Teachers who lead foundation subjects have limited opportunity to check on how effectively they are taught, and so contribute to their development.

The school has the following strengths

- Since her appointment two years ago, the headteacher has set high expectations. From a low base, she has led a rapid improvement in academic standards in all year groups.
- Leaders have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school. They plan resourcefully and effectively for its improvement.
- Leaders have created a harmonious school community firmly focused on learning. Parents are strong supporters of the school.
- Pupils behave consistently well in lessons and during social times. They are keen to learn, and rightly feel safe in school. Attendance has improved, and is currently in line with the national average.
- Leaders identify well those pupils who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, and those at risk of falling behind. They provide effective support for them in the classroom and through additional teaching.
- The quality of teaching has risen markedly in recent years, and continues to do so. Teachers use the correct subject-specific terms.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - make full use of information about pupils' existing knowledge, skills and understanding in making longer-term plans for their work
 - set tasks which provide pupils, especially the most able, with a sufficient level of challenge throughout the lesson
 - encourage pupils in key stage 2 to write at greater depth in a range of foundation subjects
 - provide regular feedback which helps pupils to learn from their mistakes.
- Improve provision in the early years by:
 - giving children good access to a well-designed and equipped outdoor area
 - ensuring that staff in the Nursery and Reception classes work together effectively, particularly in their approach to assessment.
- Extend the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that subject leads have the time and the opportunity to check on standards in foundation subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has led the rapid improvement of the school since she took up her post just over two years ago. With governors' full support, she has created a secure, caring environment in which pupils are conspicuously eager to learn. Academic standards, which were very low at the time of her appointment, have risen markedly, and are now approaching the national average.
- Good communication and mutual respect contribute to a purposeful, lively school community where everyone works towards the same goals. Parents think very highly of the school, and appreciate the introduction of an app which keeps them in touch with their children's activities and achievements.
- Leaders are very good judges of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. For example, they have identified the need for teachers to meet more comprehensively the differing learning needs in each class. Their plans for improvement are relevant and detailed, and include the criteria which allow governors and others to make judgements about how much progress the school is making. During joint lesson observation, leaders' views accorded well with those of inspectors.
- Leaders are outward looking, and have drawn effectively on advice and support from a number of sources. Staff benefit from a wide range of professional development, both within the school and elsewhere. Leaders use performance management effectively to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils and to identify their training needs. As a result, the quality of teaching has improved considerably and continues to do so, especially in the early years foundation stage.
- More recently, leaders have ensured that staff and other agencies assess accurately and promptly the needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. As a result, additional money provided to support these pupils is spent effectively. Leaders have begun to check on the impact of additional support, and adapt it if it is not proving effective.
- Leaders have a strong understanding of the factors which may prevent disadvantaged pupils from learning, and the pupil premium has been spent well, leading to a rise in the attainment of disadvantaged pupils. They have now sharpened their evaluation tools to help them identify which strategies have the greatest impact on pupils' progress.
- The school develops pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness effectively. Starting in the early years, pupils rapidly come to appreciate the importance and value of rules, and the obligation to treat adults and their peers with respect and kindness. Pupils learn about different religions and cultures. Older pupils are encouraged to take responsibility as monitors and members of the school council.
- Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum, and those who spoke with inspectors said they enjoyed the variety of subjects they studied. Subject leaders have identified the skills which underpin each subject, but do not currently have the opportunity to check on how well teachers develop pupils' skills in subjects other than English and mathematics. The physical education (PE) and sport premium is spent effectively on

increasing participation in a range of sporting and fitness activities, but leaders have yet to ensure that improvements can be sustained over the longer term.

- The local authority has provided valuable support to the school, particularly in the development of the early years provision. Leaders value the independent perspective which external reviews provide, and put any recommendations into effect.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors have an accurate and detailed understanding of the school. They are well informed about progress in the implementation of development plans, and standards of achievement, behaviour and attendance. Individual governors visit the school regularly to discuss the school's work in the areas for which they take responsibility. Records of governors' meetings show that they ask astute questions to hold leaders to account.
- The governing body is well aware of the risks that face some pupils locally, and ensure that the school's policies and procedures keep them safe in every respect. Governors make sure that the school conducts the right checks on staff when they are appointed, and that training in how to protect children is kept up to date. They have obtained the funding for a perimeter fence, which will add to the physical security of the school.
- Governors involve an independent adviser in the management of the headteacher's performance so that their decisions on her role are fairly judged. They scrutinise the headteacher's recommendations about the pay and performance of other staff.
- Governors are aware of the need to manage the school budget carefully. They check on the expenditure of additional funding provided to support particular groups of pupils and its impact on their progress.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's arrangements meet all statutory requirements. All school policies are up to date. The school's current leaders have made appropriate checks when staff are appointed, and checked that all historical records are complete. They have made sure that all staff are familiar with child protection guidance, and have been trained to an appropriate level.
- Staff are vigilant, and are well aware of how to identify and report any concerns about a pupil's welfare. Leaders work very well with parents and other agencies to help those pupils whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. They are persistent and resourceful, and will not rest until they know a child is safe. Staff meet regularly to review the welfare of pupils who may be at risk.
- Staff are singularly effective in protecting those pupils whose circumstances are particularly difficult, and in appropriate circumstances, extend their support to their families. Staff maintain a level of support for families during the school holidays.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement because it remains somewhat inconsistent. Teaching continues to improve, but, over time, pupils have not been challenged sufficiently for them to make strong progress.
- Leaders have ensured that teachers assess pupils' attainment in English and mathematics regularly, and that their judgements are checked against those of other teachers in the school and in neighbouring schools. Leaders use these assessments well to check on the progress of groups of pupils, and to identify pupils at risk of falling behind. However, some teachers make limited use of information about pupils' prior attainment in planning pupils' work.
- Inspection evidence supported leaders' observations that the work set for pupils often does not allow them to make rapid progress in the short or longer term. In some instances, teachers were reluctant to allow pupils to start work which they had planned for future lessons. This hesitancy in moving pupils on restricted what pupils were able to achieve. For example, in two PE lessons, talented pupils were left for too long repeating routines they could accomplish easily.
- In some instances, this shortcoming is compounded by the fact that tasks set for the most able pupils are too easy, as they told inspectors. Less commonly, work was too hard for the least able pupils in the class.
- The teaching of writing is currently more effective in the younger years. At key stage 2, teachers show pupils how to write in a range of styles and for different purposes, but their opportunities to write at length and pay close attention to a full range of punctuation and vocabulary are still too limited. Teachers pay explicit attention to improving pupils' spelling and punctuation, but pupils tend to repeat their errors because feedback does not help them to improve.
- Teachers take a consistent approach to teaching phonics, although the quality remains a little variable. Teachers ensure that they record pupils' progress carefully, and that learning builds on what pupils can already do. During the inspection, pupils were intensely interested in developing their phonic knowledge, because the learning activities were planned imaginatively and the classrooms were rich in language.
- Teachers are now making good provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants are skilled at breaking the learning down into smaller steps, while making sure that pupils work the answers out for themselves. Additional teaching, whether during lessons or before school, was very clearly focused and well resourced.
- The learning of all pupils benefits from well-established classroom routines and excellent relationships. Pupils continue to work hard during periods when their table does not have the direct attention of a member of staff. Teachers often use questioning effectively, and insist that pupils provide extended, verbal responses. They use the correct subject-specific terms, for example to identify and describe three-dimensional shapes.
- In mathematics, teachers encourage pupils to reason mathematically and explain their thinking. Pupils reported that homework made a useful contribution to their learning, and that there were facilities in school to help them complete it.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils, staff and parents all agree that the school is a place where pupils feel safe. Bullying is very rare, and pupils have total confidence in staff to resolve any disputes that arise. The vigilance, commitment and local knowledge of staff make the school highly effective in maintaining the welfare of all its pupils, including those most at risk.
- At the same time, this is a school where pupils really want to learn. They are inquisitive and increasingly resilient. At this relatively young age, staff encourage pupils to be independent, and to find their own strategies to solve academic problems. In the classroom, pupils have the confidence to put forward their views, and they listen respectfully to others.
- From their first days in the early years, pupils are encouraged to share, and to care for one another. Pupils were polite and friendly in talking with inspectors, and explained spontaneously how they would help a newcomer to make friends. Pupils understand the importance of being healthy, and children generally eat healthily at break and lunchtime.
- The school successfully teaches its pupils how to be safe in several respects, including how to stay safe online and near roads. Pupils demonstrated a good understanding of themselves and how to keep their personal information private. The school teaches pupils to swim. The interior of the building is bright, cheerful and well maintained. The school will benefit from a secure perimeter fence, but in the interim, leaders take appropriate steps to minimise any outdoor risk to pupils.
- Teaching introduces pupils to different cultures and religions, including Judaism and Islam. Pupils understand that all groups of people deserve equal respect, although in discussion with inspectors, some pupils' recall of other traditions was rather vague.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils move purposefully and sensibly around the school, so that shortly after social times, learning is well under way. During break and lunchtimes, they play happily together. Almost all pupils wear their uniform smartly.
- Pupils' behaviour in the classroom is consistently good. Their desire to learn means that they concentrate well and persevere, even when occasionally they finish their work or the task does not fully engage them. Pupils look after learning resources responsibly, but some present their written work legibly but not particularly neatly.
- Inspection evidence showed that the conduct of the small number of pupils who join the school with particular difficulties is improving. The improvement reflects accurate assessments of their needs, and the consistent implementation of plans for their education.
- Leaders keep good records of any serious behavioural incidents, and these show that the frequency of such events has reduced and continues to do so. During the

inspection, inspectors saw no aggressive or antisocial behaviour. Leaders have not excluded a pupil for a fixed term or permanently in recent years.

- Until recently, pupils' attendance has been below the national average. However, leaders have combined a firm insistence on regular attendance and punctuality with rewards for those who rarely miss a day's school. Consequently, this academic year, attendance has risen to be in line with the national average. The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and those who have SEN and/or disabilities has also risen to be broadly average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because pupils currently attending the school are not making consistently strong progress. Following the previous inspection, academic standards fell very steeply to the point where published outcomes were very low. In the last two years, however, standards have risen sharply once more, so that they are approaching national averages. There remains some way to go, however, if pupils are to fulfil their true academic potential.
- Information supplied by the school shows that during the last few terms, pupils' progress has hovered a little below that seen nationally. This academic year, progress in writing has been weaker than that in other subjects.
- In 2016, the last year for which outcomes have been validated, the proportions of pupils who left key stage 1 having met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics were well below the national average. No pupils had attained at greater depth. However, provisional information shows that in 2017, the proportion of pupils who met the expected standard, and those who attained at greater depth, were much closer to the national averages in each subject.
- The attainment of disadvantaged pupils has broadly followed that of other pupils in the school. As standards have risen, the difference between their attainment and that of other pupils nationally has diminished. This improvement reflects the successful expenditure of the pupil premium in overcoming many of their barriers to learning. Leaders recognise that a sharper analysis of the impact of individual strategies is required if they are to ensure that disadvantaged pupils catch up completely.
- Leaders supplied information showing that the progress of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities has varied, and has often been disappointing. Although inspection evidence showed that many pupils were responding well to better identification and provision for their needs, improvements have been too recent for there to have been a consistent and measurable impact on these pupils' progress.
- Over recent years, the boys' attainment has consistently been much weaker than that of girls, although provisional results for 2017 show that the gaps are closing. During the inspection, however, teachers showed a good awareness of how to engage boys in their learning, and inspectors identified no difference in the quality of their learning. Leaders' detailed analysis reveals much of the difference can be accounted for by the higher proportions of boys who are disadvantaged and who have SEN and/or disabilities.

- The unvalidated proportion of Year 1 pupils who attained the expected standard in the phonics check also rose in 2017, although it remains some way below the national average. This reflects past weaknesses in the teaching of phonics. In general, the school now promotes reading effectively, and weak readers use a range of methods, including phonic strategies, to help them understand a text. The most able readers in key stage 2 are fluent and well able to articulate a well-developed interest in books.
- Teachers are aware of the need to develop the skills and understanding required for each foundation subject, so that, for example, inspectors saw pupils working scientifically and developing historical skills. However, scrutiny of pupils' work showed that standards in subjects other than English and mathematics remain variable.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Provision in the early years requires improvement, primarily because staff do not make good use of the outdoor areas to extend children's learning. Although children engage in their own outdoor activities every day, facilities are limited. Supervision arrangements sometimes mean that children's access to outdoor play is not at times of their own choosing.
- The leadership of the early years is good overall, leading to rising standards and a good quality of teaching. However, staff in the Reception class and those in the much smaller Nursery classes sometimes do not share their expertise or use common procedures. Approaches to assessment are not consistent.
- The majority of pupils enter the school in either the Nursery Year or the Reception Year with skills and abilities below those typical for their age and some are well below. Leaders quickly identify those who require additional support, and inspectors saw children who have SEN and/or disabilities learning well.
- The proportion of children who have achieved a good level of development has risen markedly in recent years. Unconfirmed information supplied by the school shows that in 2017, the proportion was approaching the 2016 national average. These improving outcomes demonstrate that children typically make at least expected progress, and some make better progress, catching up quickly from their low starting points.
- The proportion of disadvantaged children who achieved a good level of development in 2017 was above that of non-disadvantaged children in the school, and represents a strong upward trend. Among children currently in the setting, the gap between the achievement of boys and that of girls is also closing rapidly.
- Staff quickly establish clear routines and expectations, so that children know from an early stage how to behave. Children's behaviour during the inspection was very good. They treated adults and their peers with respect, listened carefully and tidied up the classroom without adult prompting. The school takes the first steps in developing children's cultural and social awareness, for example by celebrating Diwali and sampling foods from a variety of traditions.
- Teachers focus very effectively on developing children's attitudes to learning and their learning skills. Desirable qualities are associated with particular creatures – an owl with concentration, a spider with problem-solving – and this plays a major part in helping

children to know how to learn well. Establishing these skills is also an excellent contribution to preparation for key stage 1.

- Teaching in the early years is good. Staff ensure that children have access to a wide range of resources, and teachers plan activities which address all areas of learning and build effectively on what children can already do. Children have extended opportunities to explore their own ideas, develop their independence and learn from their mistakes.
- Leaders work very effectively with parents. They involve parents in the assessment of children's skills when they join the provision, and encourage them to take a full part in supporting their children's learning. Parents who spoke with inspectors were particularly appreciative of how effectively staff had worked to settle children with social and emotional difficulties.
- The school's procedures to keep children safe and promote their welfare in the early years setting are rigorous. All statutory requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	116671
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	10037883

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	253
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Barratt
Headteacher	Rachel Roberts
Telephone number	01905 772 740
Website	www.westlands.worcs.sch.uk
Email address	office@westlands.worcs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2013

Information about this school

- Westlands First School is an average-sized primary school. The school roll has decreased slightly in recent years. Children who attend the Nursery classes do so part time. The school runs a popular breakfast club.
- The headteacher joined the school in September 2015, and the deputy headteacher took up her post in January 2016.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and receive support from the pupil premium is well above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is well above average.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British. Few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed learning in 22 lessons, four of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. They watched the teaching of several small groups of pupils outside the classroom. The inspectors also observed an assembly, breakfast club and pupils' conduct at break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors held discussions with senior leaders, other leaders, class teachers, governors and a representative of the local authority.
- Three groups of pupils, two chosen at random, met with inspectors. Inspectors also spoke with many other pupils informally. One inspector listened to pupils in Year 2 and Year 4 read.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' current workbooks in lessons, and scrutinised a sample in greater depth. Inspectors considered a range of information about pupils' recent academic performance.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, both electronically and on paper. These included: development plans and evaluations of the school's performance; minutes of meetings held by the governing body; policies; and anonymised information showing how the headteacher manages the performance of teachers. Inspectors scrutinised in detail records showing how the school supports vulnerable pupils.
- The inspection team also took account of the 38 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, and comments made using the free-text facility. They spoke with several parents bringing their children to school on the second day of the inspection. Inspectors also considered the 21 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Martin Spoor, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Lisa Buffery	Ofsted Inspector
Tracy Stone	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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