

West Minster Primary School

St George's Avenue, Sheerness, Kent ME12 1ET

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Outstanding leadership has ensured that, for the first time in many years, West Minster Primary is a good and rapidly improving school. Pupils make good or better progress across a range of subjects.
- The excellent, quiet and unassuming leadership of the executive headteacher has realised the potential of leaders at all levels. Consequently, the highly effective leadership of the school is truly a team approach, led passionately on a day-to-day basis by the head of school.
- The governing body provides very effective challenge and support for school leaders.
- A strong drive to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils has been very successful. Those that moved on to secondary schools this year had performed better than other pupils nationally.
- The progress made by pupils reaching the end of key stage 2 in 2016 placed them in the top 10% nationally.
- Unwaveringly high expectations are evident at all levels. Strong teaching encourages pupils to take a genuine pride in their learning and work.
- Teaching supports pupils of different abilities to do well. However, some teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop their reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Children's schooling gets off to an excellent start in the outstanding early years provision.
- Most-able pupils make good progress overall but could do even better. Correctly, a current focus for leaders is to ensure that the most able pupils, including those that are also disadvantaged, fulfil their potential.
- The high priority placed on the care and well-being of pupils is a significant part of the school's outstanding promotion of pupils' personal development and welfare. Pupils feel safe in school and have a strong sense of how to keep themselves safe in different contexts.
- Pupils behave well. Increasingly, pupils are developing excellent attitudes to learning that support their improving progress.
- Leaders go the extra mile to ensure that pupils attend regularly. Although attendance rates are rising overall, those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, in particular, could attend more regularly.
- Pupils are tolerant and respectful of differences. Their understanding of different cultures or faiths beyond their immediate experience is more limited.
- The new specially resourced provision for pupils who have speech and language needs, the Ivy Centre, is effective.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Lift the overall quality of teaching to outstanding, by:
 - enabling most-able pupils to excel, including those who are also disadvantaged
 - developing pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics.
- Deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding of faiths and cultures beyond those in their immediate community.
- Sustain the drive to bring attendance of all groups at least in line with national averages, particularly for those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Outstanding

- Outstanding leadership has significantly accelerated the pace of improvement since the previous inspection, transforming the experience of education for pupils. Leaders are remarkably modest about what they have achieved, because their attention is focused so sharply on the pupils.
- Leaders have established and stabilised a strong culture of high expectation across different aspects of the school's work. Leaders and staff are aspirational for pupils' well-being and academic performance.
- The drive to raise standards has been so effective because of leaders' complete commitment to lifting the achievement of potentially vulnerable groups. The use of pupil premium funding to raise the achievement of disadvantaged pupils has proved highly effective. Leaders' deep understanding of the implications of published research has driven their spending strategy. Disadvantaged pupils reaching the end of their primary schooling in 2016 performed significantly better than other pupils nationally.
- Leaders at different levels are both trusted and expected to deliver high standards. In this way, the executive headteacher has unlocked the considerable talent that exists within the school, including the head of school. Expertise from across the federation is used exceptionally well for the benefit of West Minster pupils.
- The staff professional development strategy is highly effective. Using economies of scale, the federation seeks out high quality, bespoke training that is focused on the carefully diagnosed aspects of practice that need to improve. Whole-school priorities are balanced well with individual teaching and leadership needs, with some staff developing into roles with enhanced responsibilities. This approach has significantly strengthened the school's capacity for continuous improvement.
- Senior leaders have a deep and accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. Leaders' relentlessly high expectations are readily apparent in their rigorous evaluations of performance. Wide-ranging checks on the quality of teaching focus strongly on pupils' learning and progress, with disadvantaged and most-able pupils a clear priority.
- All leaders and teachers are involved in the highly detailed analysis of assessment information about pupils' attainment and progress. Leaders make excellent strategic use of their findings, both to adjust provision for individual pupils and to check the most- and least-effective strategies to improve pupils' outcomes.
- This year, leaders and governors are shining the spotlight more brightly on the most able pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils. They are taking concerted action to raise these pupils' aspirations, lift their already good achievement and to enable them to really excel.
- Excellent leadership of provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including in the newly established Ivy Centre, ensures that they make at least the same good progress as their peers and sometimes achieve exceptionally well. The federation's inclusion leader and the school special educational needs coordinator dovetail in a formidable partnership, bringing clarity and a highly principled approach.

- Precise identification of pupils' needs draws a clear distinction between those who have special educational needs and those who have other additional needs. Strong links with a wide range of professionals help school staff to meet pupils' sometimes high levels of need. Leaders use comparisons of all pupils nationally to ensure high expectations of pupils who have special educational needs, with a sharp focus on securing the best possible progress from pupils' individual starting points.
- Targeted and effective use of the sports premium provides extra access to swimming lessons aimed at ensuring all pupils in this island school become confident swimmers. Alongside other spending, careful consideration is given to make sure that all improvements made are sustainable. Training to increase the number of current staff qualified to teach swimming will reduce costs for the future.
- The school's highly positive and well-established ethos and values have laid firm foundations on which to build pupils' developing understanding of fundamental British values. Pupils are extremely considerate, tolerant and respectful of each other's similarities and differences. They firmly believe that any new pupil would be warmly welcomed, irrespective of race or religion. They have a strong voice in running the school, including the school council associate membership of the governing body, and a growing understanding of democracy. Specialist teaching in Japanese is one way that pupils are exposed to a different language and culture. However, although the school's ethos prepares pupils well for their future lives overall, leaders recognise that pupils' direct experience and depth of understanding of the diversity of multicultural Britain is more limited.
- The broad and balanced curriculum includes wide-ranging sporting, musical and drama opportunities, which are key strengths in the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' achievements in a wide range of activities are celebrated, helping to raise others' aspirations. Varied clubs and trips broaden pupils' life experiences.
- Staff work very hard to engage parents in the life of the school and their children's education, including holding information evenings, coffee mornings and a parent forum. Most parents express positive views about the school.
- Recognising the strong capacity of the school's leaders, the local authority now provide appropriately 'light touch' support. Nonetheless, informed by the school's comprehensive range of assessment information, meetings are rigorous, challenging and constructive. The strong use of performance information across year groups gives bite to the discussions.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very effective.
- The governing body keeps a sharp focus on checking leaders' progress against actions in the quality improvement plan. The use of key improvement measures to drive discussions helps governors maintain their strategic role resolutely. Like leaders in school, governors are acutely aware of the challenging contextual features of the school, without any hint of an excuse culture.

- Minutes of governing body meetings reflect a well organised and purposeful approach, with actions followed through in a timely manner. Governors interrogate performance data and use it to offer school leaders robust challenge. They keep a sharp focus on key groups such as the most able, disadvantaged pupils and, more recently, where these two groups overlap.
- Governors place a high priority on the effectiveness of their own work. They attend regular training in a range of areas including the impressive commitment to attend an hour's bespoke training directly before every governing body meeting.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Pupils' welfare is at the centre of the school's work and there is a high regard for their safeguarding. Staff at all levels are well trained and know what to look out for to keep children safe.
- Leaders keep clear records showing the chronology of any concerns and the actions taken as a result. Effective partnership working with other professionals and agencies enhances the school's work to keep children safe.
- The outcomes of rigorous checks on the suitability of all staff and volunteers are recorded systematically on the single central register.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved considerably, so that pupils now benefit from typically strong practice.
- Teachers' high expectations are easily identifiable. They are reflected in the lessons that they plan, the very positive environments that they create, their interactions with pupils and the quality of work they demand from them.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' speech and language skills. Pupils' often-low starting points in this area make this a rightful priority for the school. Opportunities to speak and verbalise ideas are a key part of teaching and learning. Most-able pupils are appointed as 'leading learners' to prompt them to explain concepts to their peers. Teachers' good subject knowledge enables them to reinforce the correct use of technical vocabulary and pupils gain confidence using these terms.
- Adults' questioning is a key strength. Where appropriate, they will not accept pupils' first answer, but probe with follow-up questions. Teachers, in particular, drill down to check pupils' understanding or extend their thinking. The most effective practice ensures that most-able pupils frequently have to grapple with more difficult concepts.
- Teaching assistants make an important contribution. They are enthusiastic and passionate about what they are doing. Their effective questioning is testament to the quality of training they have received in this area. Teachers brief them well on their role and mostly deploy them well to support pupils' learning.
- Pupils understand how to improve their work and the next steps that they need to take to progress. Throughout the school, there is a clarity about intended learning and an

emphasis on key learning points. Teachers apply the school's marking policy consistently.

- Teachers ensure that lessons meet pupils' differing needs well. They often provide good opportunities to extend most-able pupils and ensure that their work reflects their capabilities. Careful use of physical resources, visual images and adult support enable those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to succeed in lessons. Where appropriate, personalised support ensures that those with higher levels of need progress well.
- Very precise and effective teaching in the Ivy Centre has ensured that the pupils who attend have made a strong start. Their individual needs are well met. Pupils engage confidently in the frequent opportunities to speak, responding well to the precise verbal feedback that they receive.
- While there are highly effective elements of teaching, learning and assessment, leaders have correctly identified that while most-able pupils make good progress, they could do even better. For example, opportunities to stretch these pupils through tasks or questions that demand mathematical reasoning are currently too limited. Further training on this aspect of mathematics is planned for leaders and teachers.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- The school very successfully includes pupils with high levels of physical, personal and/or medical needs. Qualified staff provide daily care for pupils beyond that which is routinely seen in mainstream schools.
- Pupils are extremely confident, polite, friendly and welcoming. Following the example of adults in this highly nurturing environment, pupils look out for and support each other keenly.
- Pupils, including those from the Ivy Centre, carry out roles and responsibilities proudly and diligently, including as school councillors, buddies, and 'care bears' for the younger children.
- Pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, have very positive attitudes to learning. They welcome feedback and use this very carefully to improve. Pupils also show resilience when faced with challenging tasks and questions and they are not afraid to make a mistake. Pupils take a genuine pride in their work and younger pupils are trying really hard with the newly introduced cursive handwriting.
- Pupils have a well-honed sense of their own safety. They have an extremely secure grasp of how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of different contexts, including when online or, vitally in this coastal school, near water.
- The exceptionally popular breakfast club gets the day off to a highly positive start for the large numbers of pupils that attend. Following a healthy breakfast, pupils engage in a range of active or more gentle activities. Pupils are proud of their responsibilities in helping to run the breakfast club.

- Bullying is rare. There are plentiful and varied opportunities for pupils to voice concerns and the 'well-being team' deal well with any issues that arise. They monitor carefully for any repeat patterns or concerns affecting pupils. Pupils feel that the peer-to-peer system of managing friendship issues is very effective.
- Pupils in the Ivy Centre are confident and demonstrate highly positive attitudes. They are included successfully with their peers in mainstream lessons where appropriate, as well as for breaktimes and other school activities.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils conduct themselves well around school and at lunchtimes. Year 6 corridor monitors help to make sure that these good standards are maintained.
- In some classes, pupils are developing excellent learning behaviours that make a significant contribution to their learning and progress. However, while disruption in lessons is rare, where teaching is less highly effective, some pupils still tend to switch off, lose focus or stop listening well.
- Pupils' attendance is rising overall. Disadvantaged pupils' attendance is also rising, although they lag behind other pupils slightly. Leaders do all that they can to make sure that pupils are in school, particularly the most vulnerable or disadvantaged. The federation has purchased a minibus to collect pupils with low attendance from their homes and bring them to school. Leaders monitor attendance closely and identify and respond quickly if individual attendance rates begin to dip. However, attendance of those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities remains stubbornly low.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils make good and improving progress overall across a wide range of subjects.
- In 2016, Year 6 pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, left having made progress across key stage 2 that placed them in the top 10% of pupils nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. This represented a significant improvement compared with previous years.
- Strongly accelerating progress means that standards are rising across the school. Provisional results show that attainment at the end of key stage 2 this year was above national figures, preparing pupils very well for their secondary education. The proportion of disadvantaged pupils that achieved the expected standard was above other pupils nationally in reading and mathematics, and very close to this in writing.
- Lower down the school, current disadvantaged pupils are catching up with expected levels more quickly than previous cohorts. Leaders and teachers have rightly begun to identify disadvantaged pupils and others that have the potential to do as well as their most-able peers. In the past, few disadvantaged pupils have exceeded age-related expectations.
- The most able pupils make good progress. They are often challenged to work at greater depth or at a higher standard than their peers. As one pupil explained, 'It

always starts off quite easy, then it gets really difficult quite quickly!’ That said, most-able pupils overall have not made the same substantial progress from their higher starting points as some of their peers.

- Pupils develop a joy of reading and are highly enthusiastic to read whenever they are given the opportunity. They become very involved in choosing their books, offering long explanations about why they have chosen a particular text. Most-able pupils have similarly positive attitudes and are sometimes stretched by classic texts. Identifying correctly that at times there was a lack of suitable books to challenge pupils’ differing reading abilities, leaders’ very recent spending has targeted these particular gaps. Younger pupils make steady progress learning phonics, although they use these skills more readily to read than spell.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those in the Ivy Centre, make good and sometimes exceptional progress.
- Pupils’ work across the school shows good progression in a range of subjects including English, mathematics, science and history. Frequent opportunities to engage in good quality experiences in physical education, dance, music, drama and Japanese also contribute well to their good outcomes.
- Although progress is good overall, some small variations in outcomes for particular groups of pupils remain. These isolated pockets are mainly the result of a legacy of many years of less than consistently good education. Teachers know individual pupils very well and target particular needs to help different groups of pupils catch up effectively.

Early years provision

Outstanding

- In the bustling and busy but remarkably calm atmosphere across the early years provision, children get the best start to their schooling. Children make outstanding progress from their varying starting points.
- High expectations radiate throughout the provision. The stunning environment, both inside and out, provides a wealth of learning opportunities. A fine balance between tasks led by adults and meaningful activities chosen by children ensures that no time is lost. Children are highly purposeful and engaged when playing or working with an adult.
- No longer an integral part of the teaching team, the early years leader has maintained a tight grasp on the exceptionally high quality of provision. Assessments of children’s starting points are thorough and accurate. These starting points are often below those typically seen for children of similar ages. Careful targeting of children’s next steps means that they quickly start to catch up.
- Leaders have targeted the use of additional funding highly effectively. A considerable number of children start school with low and sometimes exceptionally low speech and language skills. This is often a significant barrier affecting disadvantaged children, so spending of additional funding primarily targets speech and language input. At the end of the Reception Year in 2016, disadvantaged children did as well as other children nationally. This means that they, and others, were very well placed to tackle the rigours of the Year 1 curriculum.

- The rightful emphasis on language development is evident throughout the early years provision. Strong links with a speech and language therapist provide weekly specialist support in addition to that available in the federation.
- There are frequent good-quality opportunities for children to learn and use phonics, from identifying the initial sounds of their names in Nursery, to playing phonics games in Reception independently.
- Nursery children settle extremely quickly and join in enthusiastically with tidy-up and snack routines. Their confidence and willingness to engage shows how safe and secure they feel.
- The most able children are well stretched, with some children in Reception already writing in accurately spelled and punctuated sentences, and working with numbers up to and beyond 20. While a group played, one child wrote a list of the tools they needed to fix the climbing frame.
- The early years team works hard to engage with parents, including through very positive 'stay and play' sessions. An effective transition programme aimed at ensuring children get off to a smooth start includes open days, home visits and taster sessions for children and parents.

School details

Unique reference number	118438
Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	10019881

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Philip Matson
Headteacher	Steve Davies (executive headteacher), Hazel Brewer (head of school)
Telephone number	01795 662178
Website	www.west-minster.kent.sch.uk
Email address	westminster.office@sheernesswestfederation.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	3–4 December 2014

Information about this school

- West Minster Primary School is much larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is part of the Sheerness West Federation, a hard federation with Rose Street Primary School. Both schools share an executive headteacher and a single governing body. West Minster has its own head of school.
- Over half of pupils are disadvantaged. This is a much higher proportion than in most schools nationally.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities that are supported by the school is broadly average. The proportion that have an education, health and care plan or statement of special educational needs is well above average.

- In January 2016, the school opened a specially resourced provision on behalf of the local authority, The Ivy Centre. There are currently six pupils on its roll, all of whom have an education, health and care plan with speech, language and communication as the primary need.
- The school offers a breakfast club.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Since the previous inspection, there have been significant changes in the leadership and governance of the school. The executive headteacher joined the federation in April 2015.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes, including the specially resourced provision. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with a range of school leaders.
- The inspection team talked with pupils about their learning, scrutinised their work and heard them read.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, leaders, governors and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors also spoke informally with pupils and parents.
- The inspection team took into account 24 responses to the online survey, Parent View, as well as 55 responses to the staff questionnaire. All written comments that were added to these were considered alongside other inspection evidence.
- Inspectors observed the school's work throughout the day and examined a range of documentary evidence.

Inspection team

Clive Dunn, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Dom Cook	Her Majesty's Inspector
Rosemary Addison	Ofsted Inspector

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