

Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117348
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	358125
Inspection dates	8–9 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Colin Henderson

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	204
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Ramsdale
Headteacher	Andrew Farrugia
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 18 lessons involving eight teachers and 10 teaching assistants. Meetings were held with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at a wide range of documentation, including the school development plan, self-evaluation form and local authority reports. They also analysed 59 parental questionnaires, 94 pupil and 10 staff questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following.

- How closely is pupils' attainment tracked and how well are assessments used to raise standards, particularly in writing?
- How high are teachers' expectations of more able pupils and those from different ethnic backgrounds?
- To what extent does the school encourage pupils' personal development, well-being, enjoyment of learning and desire to achieve?
- How effective are the leadership and management in improving standards?

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils come from the local area. The proportion of pupils who come from minority ethnic backgrounds has increased and is broadly average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion speaks English as a second language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is average. The school has achieved Healthy Schools' status and the Activemark, and is a Football Association charter school.

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

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

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Watchlytes is a good school. Its caring and supportive learning atmosphere is valued highly by pupils and their parents and carers. Pupils in Year 6 talk excitedly about their school, describing it as 'exceptional' and 'extraordinary'. Pupils achieve well because they are very keen to learn, and they benefit from good teaching and an interesting range of learning activities. The extent to which they feel safe is outstanding and reflects the school's caring approach. The drive and ambition of the headteacher and his deputy, supported well by a cohesive team of staff and governors, are key factors in improving the school and raising standards. They have developed a detailed process that uses regular assessments to track the progress of each individual and groups of pupils and set challenging targets for them to achieve. Those pupils that are not on track to achieve their targets are identified quickly and extra support is put in place to improve their progress. For example, some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were not achieving as well as similar groups of pupils nationally. A stronger focus was given to meeting their needs in lessons and through the good support given by experienced and well-trained teaching assistants. These pupils now make good progress along with other pupils in the school.

The school has a strong sense of community. Pupils are clearly proud of their school and are eager to contribute to its success, for example through the work of the class and school council. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships throughout the school are excellent. Good procedures to evaluate teaching have improved its quality to a consistently good level. Teachers plan in detail to match activities to meet pupils' needs and have high expectations of their response. As a result, pupils behave well, are attentive and keen to succeed. Teachers use questions well to encourage pupils to share their ideas, although some do not consistently use supplementary, more challenging questions to extend more able pupils, for example in mathematics. Pupils enjoy an interesting curriculum, with its increasingly effective use of cross-curricular themes, and the good range of extra-curricular activities especially in sports. Their knowledge of, and participation in, healthy lifestyles are outstanding. This is reflected in the school's high level of sporting success.

Most children enter the Nursery with skills and abilities that meet nationally expected levels, although recent intakes have been above these levels. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes because of good teaching and the use of stimulating resources in a well-organised learning environment. Progress continues to be good across the school. Pupils attain above average standards in both key stages. Current data shows the school's strong focus on improving writing has raised significantly the proportion of pupils attaining the above average Level 5. Pupils who join the school, many from a wide range of different minority ethnic groups, are assimilated quickly and happily into the

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community. They are assessed to identify their needs and suitable support strategies are put in place to help them to make good progress in their learning.

The senior leadership has established rigorous procedures to check on how well the school is doing and to target improvements. A supportive and increasingly influential governing body contributes well to improving the school, for example, the proposed extension of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision. Governors' evaluation of what the school provides is improving, although not yet rigorously embedded. The school is set up well to continue to improve. Many subject leaders have only recently taken on their responsibilities. Some are beginning to contribute successfully to raising attainment, for example, in literacy, although their involvement in driving up standards within their subjects is not developed fully. The management has established good cohesion within the school and local communities and children from different backgrounds get on well together. Pupils' understanding of life in different communities within the United Kingdom and the wider world is an area for the school to develop further.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop further the processes by which subject leaders and the governing body evaluate how well pupils are achieving and targeting improvement, ensuring a rigorous approach.
- Extend good practice to encourage teachers to use challenging questions consistently to extend more able pupils.
- Improve pupils' knowledge and understanding of living in increasingly diverse communities in the United Kingdom and the wider world.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well in lessons because teaching is good; they are interested in the activity and concentrate well on achieving the learning intention. For example, pupils in Year 6 were keen to explore the meaning of a 'quest' and to develop their own story line. A further challenge to summarise their stories for the rest of the class extended their writing skills well. The significant improvements in the school's use of tracking data help all teachers, with the support of the leadership team, to ensure that different groups of pupils continue to progress well. For example, a noticeable difference between boys' and girls' attainment in reading was successfully tackled and a more rigorous focus on pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities helps them to achieve well. Most pupils in Year 2 attain the national average of Level 2 and an increasing number attain Level 3, for example in writing. Effective teaching, particularly for older pupils in Key Stage 2, helps them to maintain above average performance. A strong focus on improving pupils' writing skills is reflected in current assessment data as a significantly higher proportion of pupils in Year 6 are attaining above average levels than in previous years.

Pupils' enthusiasm for school is reflected in their good attendance. The effective use of class and school councils encourages pupils to contribute their ideas to improving the school, for example, by providing resources for pupils in Year 4 to grow fruit and vegetables for the school. Pupils are very aware of safety aspects through their involvement in the Crucial Crew safety education, for example their knowledge of e-safety. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social and moral aspects

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are particularly strong and pupils' spiritual and cultural development is enhanced by visitors such as a local rabbi and visits to historical and religious sites such as Stonehenge.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

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

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

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is good and there are some elements of outstanding practice. Teachers plan lessons carefully to match activities to the range of different learning needs. Lessons are well paced, although teachers do not always ensure that pupils know what they are expected to achieve by the end of the lesson. Teachers make good use of assessments, for example in writing, to set targets and show pupils how to improve their work. They make good use of information and communication technology to capture pupils' interest, for example, using the interactive whiteboard to identify lines of reflective symmetry. They use questions and talking partner activities successfully to encourage pupils to share their ideas. Some teachers use more challenging questions, although this is not a consistent feature and opportunities are missed, particularly in mathematics, to extend more able pupils.

The curriculum offers a good range of interesting activities and is enhanced well by extra-curricular clubs, visitors and visits, for example to look at the Golden Hind. The continuing development of cross-curricular topics boosts the interest of pupils and encourages the involvement of their parents and carers. Good links with local businesses, for example a

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local supermarket, extend pupils' learning. Good links with a local high school provide good opportunities for pupils to extend their skills in a broad range of sports.

Good care, guidance and support are key factors in helping pupils enjoy school and encouraging them to try hard. Pupils benefit from a welcoming environment, good support in classroom activities and effective induction processes when they join the school and when they move to their next school. Older pupils, in their roles as 'young leaders', help younger ones to make friends and feel safe. Pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable benefit particularly from close individual attention and the school's good links with external agencies and parents and carers.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are leadership and management?

The school benefits from the strong leadership of the headteacher. He has established an effective partnership with his deputy to form a senior leadership team that provides much of the thrust to improve the school. An effective governing body is actively involved in improving the school and checking on how well it is doing, for example by analysing tracking data. Governors have received some good training and some individual governors check on standards, although these procedures are not developed fully. The headteacher is beginning to include key subject leaders in managing their subjects and raising standards. A cohesive staff team is keen to become more involved in self-evaluation and this aspect is a priority in the comprehensive school development plan.

The school promotes equal opportunities well - a pupil in Year 6 likes his school because 'it always tries to include everyone in its programme!' The school is successful in tackling any discrimination. It has a good partnership with parents and carers which this contributes successfully to their children's learning. Safeguarding procedures are good. The school meets current requirements and the staff and governors are proactive in ensuring that the school is kept safe and secure. All staff are suitably trained in child protection and there are good systems for recording any concerns.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

A well-planned and efficiently organised learning environment provides a good variety of interesting resources. These are used well to stimulate children's learning in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Teaching is good overall and the leadership has managed a period of staff change successfully to continue to provide well for the children. There is a high level of adult support to encourage children's involvement, to regularly assess their ongoing progress and to direct aspects of their learning. Staff plan carefully to include and integrate all required areas of learning. They provide a good balance between activities which are led by adults and those that the children choose to do themselves. Adults provide consistently good support to each child and promote their learning successfully, although opportunities to extend language are not always used fully. Children in Nursery and Reception make good progress in all areas of learning. They attain standards that are above those expected nationally by the time they move into Year 1, although some have weaknesses in communication, language and literacy.

Leadership and management are good and the use of assessment data to focus on how well individuals are doing has improved hugely since the last inspection. Leaders in both Nursery and Reception have clear monitoring roles and are identifying and targeting areas of weakness. Opportunities to enable children to extend their skills and knowledge outdoors are not developed fully, although provision is being improved to meet the needs of a second Reception class scheduled to begin in January.

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These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A large majority of parents and carers who responded to the questionnaire were positive about the school. They value its friendly, caring and supportive approach and are confident about approaching the school if they have any concerns. They feel that their children are safe and really enjoy school. Parents and carers are pleased with the quality of teaching, the interesting curriculum topics, the range of sporting clubs and the progress being made by their children. They feel that the school meets their children's particular needs. Inspection findings support these positive views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 59 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 204 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	71	17	29	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	39	66	17	29	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	33	56	26	44	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	35	59	20	34	1	2	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	36	61	22	37	1	2	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	35	59	22	37	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	32	54	26	44	1	2	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	31	53	23	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	51	26	44	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	39	32	54	1	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	23	39	34	58	1	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	29	49	30	51	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	40	68	19	32	0	0	0	0

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

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	58	36	4	2
Primary schools	8	43	40	9
Secondary schools	10	35	42	13
Sixth forms	13	39	45	3
Special schools	33	42	20	4
Pupil referral units	18	40	29	12
All schools	11	42	38	9

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

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 March 2010 and are the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn and spring terms 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

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



10 November 2010

Dear Children,

Inspection of Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AZ

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. After spending two days with you, talking with you about what you do, looking at your work, watching you learn, and talking to your teachers, we have judged that your school is good.

You clearly enjoy school and we were pleased to see how well you get on together. Your behaviour is good and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how they contribute to your school community. You told us how much you enjoy the different trips out of school and the good range of clubs, especially sporting. Teachers encourage you to contribute your ideas in lessons and you are keen to do so. We have asked more of your teachers to ask challenging questions, especially for those of you who are good at learning. You use your targets well to improve your work, particularly in writing.

Many of you talked proudly about your school community. We have asked your headteacher and the staff to help you get a better understanding of what life is like for people living in different communities in this country and in the wider world. We have also asked your school to provide more opportunities for governors and teachers who are responsible for particular subjects to see where they can help you achieve even better.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Yours sincerely

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector

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