

Writtle Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115047
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	378990
Inspection dates	27–28 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Richard Blackmore

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	198
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ralph Bray
Headteacher	Nicholas Taylor
Date of previous school inspection	4 December 2008
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Age group	7–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors observed twelve lessons taught by eight teachers. Meetings were held with members of the leadership team, curriculum leaders, members of the governing body and the school council. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at: the school's action plan; documents and policies detailing how pupils are kept safe; the school's tracking data to see how well pupils are doing; and analyses of pupils' standards. Inspectors scrutinised 94 completed questionnaires from parents and carers together with 14 from staff and 98 from pupils.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How fast is the progress made by pupils, especially in mathematics?
- How successful are the school's actions to raise the standards girls reach in English?
- What impact have the actions taken by school leaders had in raising standards?

Information about the school

The school is a little smaller than most schools of this type. Most pupils are White British and there are no pupils who speak English as an additional language. There is a higher-than-average proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but the number of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. The number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The school has achieved national Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

Writtle Junior School provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. The new headteacher has acted quickly, decisively and effectively to make changes that have already had impact, particularly on the rising standards in English. Pupils love coming to school, as one parent commented about her child, 'She is disappointed when it is the weekend as she can't go to school'. This is part of the reason for their excellent attendance. The school has a number of strengths, most notably the good quality of care, guidance and support it provides for its pupils and the exciting curriculum. These features contribute to a very welcoming learning environment helping pupils to settle quickly and grow in confidence. As a result, their recent progress has accelerated.

Pupils enter the school with average starting points. Most pupils make satisfactory progress; some make good progress from their individual starting points and attain standards that are broadly similar to the national average. While pupils' progress is accelerating in some year groups in English, this is not a consistent picture across the whole school or in all subjects. This is because teaching overall is satisfactory and the quality of teaching varies, particularly in mathematics, because there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in practical tasks and in other subjects. The school is taking effective action to improve provision. For example, the whole school approach to teaching writing through writing journals and specific group tasks focusing on developing grammatical skills has had a positive impact. The latest school assessment information and evidence from pupils' work show that girls, who in the past have not done as well as boys in English, have now caught up. They have benefited from recent initiatives such as 'Wicked Writers', which promotes the use of writing features such as paragraphs.

In lessons, inspectors found that the quality of teaching is variable. Some teaching is good and demonstrates the progress that pupils can make when lessons are well planned, use interesting resources and adapt their teaching styles to the needs of learners. In contrast, there are times when teachers do not use assessment information well enough to ensure that activities are well matched to pupils' different abilities, especially the higher attainers. Some teachers spend a long time explaining new ideas and this results in pupils being presented with answers rather than seeking answers for themselves.

The headteacher leads the school well and uses self-evaluation to provide a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school's monitoring of

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teaching and learning adequately identifies how well pupils are learning but it has not been consistent or frequent enough to identify fully where individual teachers need to improve their practice. The governing body has worked hard has developed new systems to develop the role of governors in monitoring the work of the school and is increasingly holding the school to account but its understanding and impact is limited. Consequently the school has satisfactory capacity to make further improvements.

Up to 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment and rate of progress, particularly in mathematics by:
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to use mathematics in other subjects.
 - planning more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills in regular investigational and practical 'real-life' tasks.
- Ensure that more teaching is consistently good by:
 - making sure that pupils, particularly higher-attaining pupils, are challenged sufficiently in their learning
 - ensuring that explanations are short and sharp so pupils get down to work more quickly.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring there are more opportunities for senior leaders to monitor the work of others in all classes so that they can identify what individual teachers need to do to improve their teaching
 - ensuring that governors play a full part in challenging the school to improve further.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

Current evidence indicates that the pace of learning is speeding up. The quality of pupils' learning seen during the inspection was satisfactory overall and sometimes good. Progress in mathematics is slower than English because sometimes tasks rely too heavily on worksheets, reducing the scope for pupils to be independent. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other pupils because the school uses effective programmes to support their learning soon after the identification of a particular need. For example, one-to-one sessions have been used well to address the needs of pupils who have fallen behind in literacy. The school's assessment information, which although at the early stages of being

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embedded into teaching, is well structured and gives a clear picture of how well pupils are doing. This information shows that an increased proportion of pupils are expected to reach the appropriate levels for their age. In general, boys' attainment has been higher than that of girls in English. To tackle this inequality, the teachers have taken greater account of girls' interests when planning and have successfully raised their confidence in the subject. Inspectors did not see any significant differences between the performance of girls and boys in lessons or in pupils' current work. Pupils are keen to do well and talk enthusiastically about the quality of their work. An example was seen in a Year 4 lesson when pupils were provided with success criteria so that they could evaluate their use of features such as bullet points and subheadings to improve the calibre of their writing.

Pupils behave well and make helpful contributions to the school community. For example, members of the school council enthusiastically air pupils' views at their frequent meetings and are very proud of the improvements they have made. The school ensures pupils understand the importance of attending school and they respond very well to this challenge and encouragement. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They are very aware of the dangers they face in everyday life and how to deal with them. Pupils feel safe from bullying and if they have concerns, they know who to go to and are confident their concerns will be dealt with promptly. The need to take regular exercise and to eat healthily is understood by pupils and this knowledge is consistently applied at playtime through their desire to participate in active and energetic team games. This, and the work towards Healthy Schools status and the Activemark award, reflects the school's commitment to this aspect of the pupils' development. Pupils reflect maturely on their feelings and the actions of others. A strong moral code underpins their good behaviour. The school provides a range of experiences to develop their understanding of different beliefs, and links with a number of countries, including France, Portugal and Gran Canaria deepen their knowledge of other cultures. Good social skills, enthusiasm and improving basic skills ensure that they are satisfactorily prepared for their future life.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2

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

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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	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers foster good relations with pupils, giving them the confidence to respond to questions, share ideas with the class and ask for help when needed. Teachers mostly provide work that pupils find interesting and relevant, though sometimes too long is spent explaining to pupils what the lesson is about, and lessons are not always adapted to the needs and interest of pupils. A wide range of resources, including computer technology is used to stimulate pupils' interest and engagement. For example, teachers used Skype to provide an audience across the school for pupils to speak to in French.

The school has an effective curriculum, which is helping to raise standards quickly and maintain pupils' clear enjoyment of school. There are good plans to develop the curriculum over the coming year to create more links between subjects, which are currently limited, so that pupils can use their skills in different situations. Regular opportunities to practice and develop literacy in all subjects aids pupils' learning, but similar opportunities are not yet fully in place to promote and extend numeracy skills. There is good enrichment through visits and visitors such as the Year 6 residential trip to Wales incorporating Pembroke Castle and Tenby lifeboat station. Teachers plan a range of innovative activities to support pupils' learning outside the classroom. The archaeological dig on the school field with Heritage Writtle gave a practical opportunity for pupils to develop their enquiry skills and have a go at 'dowsing', (finding metal in the ground). There are several well-attended extra-curricular activities including football and hockey.

Pupils receive effective academic and pastoral support because the school's system for monitoring pupils with particular needs includes extensive information on both learning and personal growth, supporting the development of their social skills. Counselling is used effectively to support pupils at difficult times in their lives, for example when experiencing bereavement. Pupils with special educational needs receive well-targeted support, particularly in the classroom but sometimes teaching assistants miss opportunities to support pupils' learning during the initial part of lessons. Transitions between schools are extremely thorough and links with the secondary schools ensure pupils are confident when moving on. The school works effectively with care agencies and pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable, offering additional support when transferring from class to class and to other schools. The school is very successful in the way in which it helps those pupils who join the school part way through the year to settle in quickly and happily, one

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pupil commenting. 'I love my new school.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account:	
The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 is managed effectively by the headteacher who has made positive changes that are starting to have an impact on progress across the school. For example, standards in English, which although average are rising because of detailed and accurate analysis of school information on pupils' progress. Partnerships are being used successfully to further improve the quality of the school's provision. It has strong links with a school in Braintree that is guiding teachers to be more active in ensuring positive outcomes for pupils. However, subject leaders do not analyse pupils' progress and monitor lessons fully so there is limited impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There are strong community links both within school, locally and globally. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to communicate with pupils in Europe and play instruments from different cultures. Pupils play a significant role within the school writing interesting items for 'Little Writtle', a newsletter for parents written by the pupils. However, the evaluation of planned actions and events is not formally recorded and requires further development. The school's engagement with parents and carers is good. Those parents that responded during the inspection were overwhelmingly supportive of the school and value the help offered to families. The school's commitment to equal opportunities is satisfactory but the success of its plans to reduce gender differences in progress show that its policies are starting to have a positive impact. The school's safeguarding arrangements are satisfactory and recruitment checks on staff and risk assessments are in place and comply with requirements. The school has accurately prioritised areas for improvement mirroring those observed during the inspection. It has succeeded in addressing some key weaknesses but these are yet to be sustained.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account:	
The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities	3

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met	
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	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Views of parents and carers

There was a very good response rate to the questionnaire. The vast majority of parents and carers who responded agree that their child enjoys school, that the school is well led and managed, that the school helps their child to lead a healthy lifestyle and that overall they are happy with the school. They are unanimous in their agreement that their child is kept safe at school and most agree with all the other statements. A few parents and carers disagreed that their child makes good progress. The inspectors recognised that progress for pupils could be quicker.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Writtle Junior 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 94 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 198 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	65	69	28	30	0	0	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	67	71	27	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	47	50	43	46	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	47	41	44	4	4	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	54	57	34	36	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	50	53	38	40	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	53	56	39	41	1	1	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)	52	55	37	39	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	46	49	44	47	2	2	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	42	45	47	50	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	48	51	39	41	2	2	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	61	65	32	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	57	61	36	38	1	1	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 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.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

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.



29 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Writtle Junior School, Chelmsford, CM1 3HG

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. We enjoyed our time with you and I am writing to thank you for being so welcoming and helpful. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You go to a satisfactory school. Under the leadership of the new headteacher there are improvements which you told me you like and which help you to feel safe and attend school very often – well done for that! You are well looked after and have confidence to approach the adults around you if you have any concerns. You have a good understanding of how to keep healthy.

You are not doing quite as well in mathematics as you are in English. Some of you who find learning a bit easier are not always given work that is challenging enough to really make you think and some of you are not clear about how to improve your work.

Your headteacher is keen to make things better for you. We have asked him to do a few things to help. We have asked the headteacher to make sure teachers help you to learn more quickly, particularly in mathematics. We also want your teachers to help you by making sure that the work always challenges you enough to make you think hard to find the answers, particularly those of you who find work easy. We have also asked the people who lead the school to ensure that they check more thoroughly, how successful the school is in carrying out plans for improvement. You can help by making sure that you do your best and keep concentrating in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore
Lead inspector

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