

Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery)

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117161
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379360
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	David Wynford-Jones

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	215
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anna Addison
Headteacher	Elizabeth Griffiths
Date of previous school inspection	12 May 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited an assembly and 16 lessons, observing seven teachers. They held meetings with members of the governing body, staff and groups of pupils. They scrutinised a wide range of documentation, including the data the school has collected on pupils' attainment and progress, procedures for keeping pupils safe and the priorities for the school development plan. Inspectors analysed 74 questionnaires completed by parents and carers, together with those from staff.

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

- How effective are the strategies recently implemented by the school to improve attainment in writing?
- How well is assessment information used to inform teaching and accelerate pupils' learning?
- Do pupils know how to improve their work?
- How effective is provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Information about the school

Watford Field School (Infant and Nursery) is broadly average in size for its type. There are many nationalities represented within the school. The majority of pupils are of minority ethnic heritage. The largest groups are of Asian background. The proportion of pupils of White British origin is much lower than the national average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is higher than that found in most primary schools. A very small minority are at the early stages of learning English. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities is lower than average. However, the proportion of pupils supported by the school on 'school action plus' or with a statement of special educational needs is average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is slightly below average. The school holds the Investors in People award.

The Early Years Foundation Stage consists of two part-time Nursery classes and two Reception classes. Three members of the senior leadership team are currently on extended leave of absence.

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

This is an inclusive, caring school which provides its pupils with a good education. Pupils enjoy school, behave well and willingly take on responsibilities. Their personal development is good. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and the wider community. They feel safe because their relationships with staff are good, and good systems for ensuring their care and well-being are embedded in school routines. Parents and carers are supportive of the school. Nearly all of the comments on the questionnaires were positive. Several commented on the commitment of the headteacher and the teachers to ensure their children are well looked after and make good progress. One wrote, 'My children have enjoyed every moment of their time at the school. The headteacher and the staff are incredibly professional and caring. They provide a safe, happy stimulating learning environment.'

Pupils' achievement is good. Children settle quickly into the Nursery and the Reception classes. Staff ensure the children are kept safe and are well cared for. Children make good progress in their personal, social and emotional development and satisfactory progress in the other areas of learning. They do not make quicker progress in these areas because assessment procedures are not sufficiently robust and children are not given sufficient opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, the use of the outdoor area to promote learning is under-developed. In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 2, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is average. Attainment in mathematics is consistently slightly higher than that in writing. The school is addressing this as a matter of urgency. A commercial scheme, which focuses on improving pupils' reading and writing skills, has recently been introduced. This is proving effective and standards, especially in writing, are rising.

Much of the teaching, particularly in Key Stage 1, is good. Learning generally proceeds at a quick pace. Teachers use questioning strategies effectively to probe and challenge pupils' understanding and thinking. Good use is made of 'talk partners' to promote pupils' social, speaking and listening skills. At times, the quality of teaching slips and learning slows. This is because assessment information is not always used sufficiently well to plan work that meets the needs of pupils of different abilities, by providing the right level of challenge and high expectations. Pupils are regularly asked to evaluate their own learning in individual lessons. However, marking does not consistently provide pupils with sufficient guidance to improve their work rapidly.

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The senior leadership team and the governing body provide effective leadership and a clear sense of direction. Based on a detailed analysis of pupils' outcomes, the school's strengths and weaknesses have been correctly identified. The school has responded well to the temporary absence of senior staff. Middle leaders and subject coordinators are successfully contributing to school development but have yet to become fully involved in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The governing body is supportive. It has ensured that the school has continued to move forward since the last inspection. Given all the above, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - improving planning to ensure that children are given more opportunities to contribute to their own learning
 - developing the outside environment to promote children's skills and understanding across all areas of learning.

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by:
 - embedding procedures and the use of assessment information to match work in lessons precisely to the needs and abilities of pupils
 - ensuring that pupils know and understand what they have to do to improve their work
 - extending the role of subject coordinators in driving school improvement.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Children enter the Nursery and Reception classes with skills and knowledge below those expected for the age. Throughout the school, pupils show respect for each other and for adults. They are polite and generally work hard in lessons. Their speaking and listening, reading, writing and mathematical skills are developing well. For example, in a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils worked with sustained concentration to locate positions on a grid. They were able to explain confidently how they arrived at the position and used subject-related vocabulary appropriately. Similarly, in a Year 2 science lesson pupils worked together effectively to create an electric circuit. They used the correct terminology such as bulb, wire, battery, clips and circuit to explain what they had done when responding to the teacher's probing questions. Some pupils were able to make and explain a circuit with two bulbs.

Pupils' enjoyment of school contributes significantly to their positive attitude towards learning. They have a good knowledge of healthy living and many are keen to adopt the lifestyle. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and undertake voluntary tasks. They contribute well to the school as members of the school council. They act sensibly in the playground and provide support for those who are less confident. They contribute to charity and take part in events beyond the school. The vast majority of pupils have a good understanding of right and wrong. Their ability to

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reflect on others’ feelings is good and they show respect for each other’s cultural background. Overall, their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those who find school challenging and pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to their peers. They respond well to additional support provided in lessons and are engaged in their learning. Regular visits and the advice offered by a specialist teacher from a local special school helps ensure that provision is well matched to their needs. There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils. The school’s ongoing monitoring of pupils’ progress ensures that any underachievement is identified and timely additional support is provided. Pupils’ average attainment in reading, writing and mathematics, average attendance and strengths in their personal development ensure that they have a secure basis for the next stage in their education and later life.

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	3
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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	3
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

In most lessons, pupils make good progress. Typically, there is a good balance between the teacher’s contributions and those made by the pupils. Electronic whiteboards are used confidently to enhance learning. Teaching assistants are deployed well and provide good support to individuals and groups. Questioning strategies are used effectively to challenge pupils’ thinking and to consolidate their understanding. The sharing of ideas with a ‘talk partner’ is a regular feature. This helps pupils to develop their social skills and their ability to communicate with others.

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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Most lessons proceed at a quick pace but occasionally the start of the lesson is over-long and pupils spend too much time sitting on the carpet. Most teachers use assessments effectively to plan their lessons, but occasionally the work is not matched closely enough to pupils’ needs and abilities. There are some examples of good marking where pupils are given clear guidance to improve their work, but this is not securely established throughout the school. As a result, pupils are not always clear about the next steps needed to achieve their targets. Teachers do not routinely refer back to previous marking to ensure that the pupils have responded to the comments.

The curriculum is well organised. It supports pupils’ academic and personal development effectively. A well-thought-out theme or topic approach enables pupils to make the links in learning between subjects. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to consolidate and extend pupils’ skills in writing, and to develop their ability to use information and communication technology to undertake research. The curriculum is adapted and supported effectively to meet the needs of pupils who find learning difficult and those at the early stages of learning English as an additional language. It is enhanced by good links with external bodies and a good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors to the school.

The good level of care contributes significantly to all pupils’ learning, but particularly those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable. All pupils are made welcome and fully included in the life of the school. Systems and structures to ensure pupils’ well-being and safety are well established in school routines. Staff work closely with parents and carers and with a range of external agencies to support individual pupils to ensure that their particular needs are met. Attendance records are monitored carefully and any unexplained absence is followed up promptly. Induction and transition arrangements are securely embedded in the work of the school. As a result, pupils move confidently to the next stage in their school career.

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 headteacher, senior leaders and the governing body work together well to drive school improvement. As a group, they accurately evaluate the school’s strengths and areas for development. They have correctly identified the priorities for improvement, although the lack of sharp, measurable outcomes in the school development plan hampers the governing body in providing forceful challenge to the leadership team.

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Nevertheless, senior staff monitor the quality of teaching and learning closely. They set high expectations and hold staff to account for the progress pupils make.

The governing body ensures that the school’s safeguarding policies, checks on staff recruitment and child protection procedures meet requirements. Issues relating to equality of opportunity are monitored well. The governing body regularly checks to see if there are discrepancies in performance between groups of pupils and if there are any issues of discrimination. If any arise, they are investigated and if necessary action is taken. As a result, there are no significant differences in the performance of groups. The school makes a good contribution to promoting community cohesion. Pupils in this culturally diverse school get on well together and show respect for each other’s religious and cultural backgrounds. They take an active part in local events. Links with local schools enable pupils to develop their understanding of cultures not represented within the immediate community. The school is planning to extend these links and is endeavouring to establish contact with schools in other countries.

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

Early Years Foundation Stage

Induction arrangements and relationships with parents and carers are good. As a result, children settle quickly and grow in confidence. They feel safe and enjoy learning within a caring environment. They cooperate, follow instructions and are developing their social skills well. Their behaviour is good. Children have a good understanding of healthy living. They know the importance of washing their hands before eating and that some foods are better than others to keep you healthy.

The classrooms are well organised and children’s work is celebrated and displayed effectively. The outdoor area is developing satisfactorily. However, its potential to

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promote all aspects of learning has not been maximised. Resources are of suitable quality and appropriate for the age of the children. Planning covers all the areas of learning but does not ensure that all activities are sufficiently well matched to the needs of the children. Too many of the activities tend to be initiated and led by adults. There are insufficient opportunities for children to make their own choices.

The Early Years Foundation Stage team work together well, and have a satisfactory understanding of its strengths and areas for development. Appropriate systems and structures ensure the welfare of the children and record their academic progress. Assessments are regularly undertaken and recorded in the children’s ‘Learning Journey’ folders. They are increasingly being used to identify individual children’s needs and to target support. However, they are not always sufficiently precise. Some Key Stage 1 subject leaders are involved in the Early Years Foundation Stage but have not contributed sufficiently to promoting good practice.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Most replies were entirely supportive of the school. All the respondents indicated that their children enjoy school and are keep safe. All were happy with the experiences the school offers their children. A few parents and carers commented that the school does not take sufficient account of their concerns and suggestions. Inspectors judged that links with parents and carers are good and that the school welcomes parental involvement.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery) 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 215 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	53	72	21	28	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	77	17	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	47	64	25	34	1	1	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	44	59	28	38	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	55	74	18	24	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	48	65	23	31	3	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	44	59	27	36	1	1	2	3
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)	41	55	29	39	0	0	4	5
The school meets my child’s particular needs	44	59	29	39	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	40	54	30	41	2	3	2	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	38	51	31	42	3	4	2	3
The school is led and managed effectively	54	73	19	26	0	0	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	55	75	18	25	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	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 8 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.



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watford Field School (Infant & Nursery), Watford, WD18 OWF

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit and talking to you. You told us that you enjoy school and feel safe because the staff look after you well. You know that you can turn to them if you are worried. We were pleased to find that you have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. We saw that you behave well and show respect for each other. You make a good contribution to the school and the local community.

Your school provides you with a good education. You get off to a satisfactory start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In Key Stage 1 you build on this secure start and make good progress. The standards you reach in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 are consistently similar to those expected for your age.

We have asked the school to do these things to help you reach higher standards and make quicker progress.

- In the Nursery and Reception classes, make better use of the outside areas and give you more opportunities to choose the activities in lessons.
- Use assessment information more carefully to plan work that is just right for you, and to make certain you know what you have to do to improve your work.
- Ensure that the adults in charge of subjects extend their work across the school.

Please remember, to make your school better you must play your part by always trying your best.

Yours sincerely

David Wynford-Jones
Lead inspector

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