

Woodthorne Primary School

Woodthorne Road South, Tettenhall, Wolverhampton, WV6 8XL

Inspection dates 25–26 October 2012

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils are not achieving well enough in writing. Too few pupils in both key stages reach the higher levels because they are not always given hard enough work.
- Teachers miss chances to let pupils write at length and there are not always enough opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills in different subjects.
- Although there is some outstanding teaching in the school, not all pupils make the progress expected of them, particularly in writing, because there is too much inconsistency in the quality of teaching, especially at the beginning of Key Stage 2.
- When teachers mark pupils' work they do not always let them know how to improve. Not all pupils have targets to help them work out whether they are doing well enough.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is not checked with enough rigour.
- The school does not always provide parents with enough information about how well their children are doing.
- Although teaching is improving, leaders and governors do not measure the impact of teaching on pupils' learning carefully enough.

The school has the following strengths

- Children get off to a good start in the Nursery and Reception classes through consistently good teaching so that they make good progress in all areas of learning.
- In the current Year 6 class, attainment in mathematics is above average because more able pupils are being pushed to work harder.
- Attainment in reading is above average in Years 5 and 6 because reading is taught particularly well in these year groups.
- Strong relationships between staff and pupils contribute well to pupils' good personal development.
- Most pupils behave well, are courteous and polite. There is very little bullying, and so pupils feel safe. By the time pupils leave, most are mature, responsible individuals who want to succeed.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 23 lessons taught by 16 teachers and support staff. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with pupils, representatives of the governing body and local authority, and staff, including senior and middle leaders.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the online Parent View. They spoke informally with parents and carers and took note of comments forwarded to the inspection provider.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school. They looked at a range of documentation, including information about pupils' progress, child protection and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Kath Campbell, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Michael Lafford

Additional Inspector

Mary Le Breuilly

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Woodthorne is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- A below-average proportion of the pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils supported at school action and at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is higher than average.
- Very few pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has experienced a period of staffing disruption. There has been a new headteacher since the previous inspection and a new deputy headteacher is due to take up post in November 2012.

Serious incidents that occurred at the school since the previous education inspection are under investigation by the appropriate authorities. Ofsted does not have the power to investigate incidents of this kind. The welfare provision in the school was evaluated against the regulations that are in place and inspection judgements are based on the evidence available at the time of the inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- During the current academic year, improve the consistency of teaching and increase the proportion of good and outstanding teaching by:
 - using target setting to measure how well each pupil is doing and make sure that pupils of all abilities are set work at the right level to speed up their learning
 - using marking more effectively to let pupils know what they need to do to improve
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice that exists within the school
 - making sure that, when pupils work independently, they make as much progress as they do when they are working with adult help.
- Raise attainment in writing throughout the school by making sure that:
 - all teachers consistently demand the best of pupils
 - pupils are given more opportunities to write at length and to practise their writing skills in different subjects
 - pupils understand what they need to do to improve their written work.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - monitoring more rigorously the progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs
 - making sure that when leaders visit lessons, they focus with greater precision on the impact of teaching on learning

- establishing stronger working links with parents
- developing the skills of governors, so that they have a good enough first-hand knowledge of how well pupils are doing and whether standards are high enough
- arranging an external review of governance to assess how it can be improved.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the nursery with skills, knowledge and understanding that are similar to the levels expected nationally for their age. Some children have weaker early talking and writing skills. After achieving well in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils' achievement between Years 1 and 6 requires improvement because progress is not consistent enough, particularly at the beginning of Key Stage 2. Progress in writing is not always good enough.
- Attainment in writing is broadly average across the school. Standards have declined in recent years, chiefly because, until recently, pupils in Years 3 and 4 underachieved. Their progress was particularly slow in writing. Current work shows encouraging signs that these pupils now make better progress, although there is some way further to go before it is good.
- Not enough importance is given to writing. Although there are many examples of good-quality written work, such as in pupils' 'Creative Curriculum' books, teachers sometimes miss valuable opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills. For example, in some lessons, pupils talk to each other at length about their ideas for stories but are not encouraged to put these ideas down on paper. Pupils do not always know how well they are doing and they are not clear about the next steps in their learning. Not all pupils have targets that show them how to improve.
- Considerable staffing disruption in Year 6 led to progress in this year group slowing temporarily in 2011. Several pupils did not reach expected standards. The current picture is far more stable. Year 6 pupils of all abilities are doing well because they are taught well.
- The progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium funding, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, although similar to that of other pupils overall, is variable. Some pupils achieve very well through good-quality help, others make slow progress when teaching is less effective. Action taken recently to target help at those in most need is starting to ensure greater consistency but has not been in place long enough to measure its impact on standards.
- The small number of pupils who are at an early stage of speaking English make rapid progress because the good-quality help they get allows them to join in with all activities.
- In mathematics, there is evidence that the introduction of problem-solving books has helped pupils to think for themselves as they respond well to the challenge. Many pupils develop a wide range of strategies for solving mathematical problems and are enthusiastic about mathematics by the time they leave.
- The school teaches reading through letters and sounds (phonics) effectively. Younger pupils are confident to have a go at unfamiliar words. Older pupils develop a genuine enjoyment of books because reading is taught exceptionally well at the end of Key Stage 2. The range of books on offer captures pupils' interest. In discussion, pupils talk with clarity about why they like particular books and have great appreciation for the work of a wide variety of authors.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it varies in quality. Not enough is good.
- Inconsistencies in teaching were very clear when inspectors looked at examples of pupils' past and present work. Expectations have not been high enough. In both key stages, there was evidence that, far too often, teachers accept careless work and do not push pupils hard enough to finish or improve.
- Another key weakness in teaching lies in the inconsistent way in which teachers check on the progress of individual pupils and share this information with them. All too often pupils do not know what is expected of them or the next steps they need to take to move their learning on.
- Children do well in the Early Years Foundation Stage because they receive good-quality individual attention. Indoor and outdoor learning areas are used effectively to promote good learning and the range of activities helps children of all abilities to do well. Adults take every opportunity to develop children's speaking and listening skills.
- Teaching in Key Stage 1 is often good. Activities generally provide the right level of challenge for pupils of all abilities and teachers give pupils many chances to develop their independent learning skills. Sometimes, the activities that pupils undertake without help are undemanding and this slows their progress.
- In Key Stage 2, there is greater variation. In Years 5 and 6, teaching is consistently good, with some that is outstanding. Elsewhere in the key stage, the rate of pupils' progress is noticeably slower because there is not always enough challenge.
- The most effective teaching is exceptionally well planned and activities capture pupils' interest very effectively. This was evident in a Year 5 lesson, where a group of more able pupils were totally engrossed in reading *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Pupils of all abilities made very rapid progress because they were clearly inspired by the choice of book and the exciting range of activities.
- Extra funding has been used to improve the overall attainment of a group of pupils in lower Key Stage 2 who have previously underachieved. The extra one-to-one help they have received has proved effective because pupils respond well to the individual attention. Other pupils also benefit from working in smaller groups. Progress speeds up because teachers and other adults have more time for each pupil.
- Disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language receive good-quality help in lessons. Most teachers make sure that activities match the needs of these pupils. As a result, they make as much progress as others.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' positive attitudes and good behaviour contribute greatly to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils of all ages and backgrounds work and play well together. They are proud of their school and are keen to talk about what they are doing. Pupils say that the school is a place where they feel very safe.
- Adults manage behaviour very well and the relationships between adults and pupils are

consistently good throughout the school. The strong emphasis on developing children's personal and social skills in the Nursery and Reception classes establishes solid foundations for teachers to build on in the rest of the school.

- In lessons, pupils are generally enthusiastic and interested in their work. They show respect for each other and are courteous and polite. Occasionally, a few pupils, particularly boys, do not make as much effort as they should. This usually happens when the teacher is working with other pupils or when teaching is not as good as it should be.
- In discussion, pupils say that incidents of poor behaviour and bullying are rare. When necessary, swift effective action is taken to ensure that there is no recurrence. Any incidents of bullying or racism are recorded carefully by the school. Pupils say that adults are very approachable and will listen if they are worried about anything. Pupils have a good understanding of how to avoid dangers when using computers and the internet. Safeguarding procedures meet requirements.
- Attendance is average. The school keeps a careful check on the attendance of pupils who may be at risk of falling behind to make sure that they attend regularly.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because, during a period of staffing turbulence, standards have slipped. Although the headteacher has provided stability during difficult times, he has not moved the school forward at a fast enough pace.
- The relatively new senior leadership team and other teachers who have recently taken over responsibility for their subjects have made a good start on sorting out the main issues that led to standards slipping. The introduction of good-quality systems for checking pupils' progress is identifying underachievement much more quickly. It is too early to measure the impact of their work.
- No-one has a clear enough grasp of whether disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make as much progress as they should. Although individual teachers make sure that these pupils achieve as well as others in lessons, the systems for checking their progress as they move through the school are inadequate. They are not sufficiently well coordinated. As a result, no-one knows precisely how much impact any extra help has had on the progress these pupils make. This means that the better progress being made at present by some pupils is by no means certain to continue.
- The school improvement plan is aptly based on what the school does well and what it needs to do to raise attainment. However, it does not always focus with enough precision on ways to reverse the recent decline in standards.
- Teachers have far greater responsibility than in the past for the standards pupils achieve. The ways in which the school checks teachers' performance have been strengthened so that staff are not rewarded unless they are successful in helping pupils to make at least good progress. However, the arrangements are not precise enough because the checks that are carried out do not focus sufficiently on the impact of teaching on pupils' learning.
- Parents and carers have mixed views about the leadership of the school, partly because not all of them are involved enough or feel that they get sufficient information about whether their children make as much progress as they should.

- The school provides a suitable range of activities that motivates pupils well. Pupils know quite a bit about other faiths and cultures. They enjoy the activities on offer, particularly the interesting range of extra-curricular clubs. Opportunities, such as joining the boys' choir, make a good contribution towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, there is too little emphasis on developing writing and, to a lesser extent, mathematical skills in different subjects and not enough attention is given to improving spelling and punctuation.
- The local authority has supported the school well during a period of instability. It is now focusing with urgency on making sure that the school successfully tackles underachievement and reverses the decline in standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is supportive and wants the best for the school. It makes sure that arrangements for pupils' welfare and safeguarding satisfy the current regulatory requirements. It ensures that it fulfils its statutory responsibilities and is fully involved in the appointment of new staff. It has made sure that pupil premium funding has been allocated wisely to target help at pupils, such as those in Year 3, at most risk of underachieving. Although the governing body has a reasonable knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, it does not possess the necessary skills to judge whether teaching is good enough. Similarly, the governing body does not always know if or why pupils have underperformed because it is not sufficiently involved in monitoring teachers' performance.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	104354
Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	402942

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	436
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Gurpreet Gill
Headteacher	Mathew Alcock
Date of previous school inspection	27 February 2008
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