

# Widford School

Ware Road, Widford, Ware, SG12 8RE

**Inspection dates** 14–15 March 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- From their starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well across the school. Some make outstanding progress, particularly in reading.
- Teaching is typically good and some is outstanding. There is a particular strength in extending pupils' speaking, listening and writing.
- The skilled teaching assistants give helpful support in each class making a good contribution to pupils' learning.
- Parents and carers are supportive and appreciate the friendly family feel at the school that helps pupils to develop confidence.
- Good relationships between adults and pupils, as well as work that is well planned and interesting, means that pupils enjoy being at school and have good attitudes to learning.
- Pupils' performance is closely tracked and the school has a clear picture of their progress.
- The headteacher leads the school effectively and staff share her ambition and drive continually to raise standards.
- The governing body is supportive and has a good working knowledge of the day-to-day running of the school.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not always know well enough what they need to do to improve.
- Some lessons do not provide enough demanding work for more-able pupils.
- Pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to use computers to support their learning.
- The teaching of joined handwriting is not secure in the school's practice.

## Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed teaching and learning in nine lessons or part lessons and observed an assembly. Two observations were done jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspector held meetings to discuss the work of the school with the headteacher, teachers and members of the governing body, as well as a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector looked at the work in pupils' books and heard pupils read. She held discussions with pupils to gather evidence on how well pupils know what they are learning or need to learn next.
- The inspector spoke informally to parents and carers at the start of the school day and considered the 14 responses to Ofsted's online survey for parents and carers, Parent View. The views of staff were also evaluated.
- A wide range of school documentation was considered. This included information relating to the progress of pupils, the school's self-evaluation, the school's development plans, minutes from governing body meetings, documents about keeping pupils safe, behaviour records and the local authority's evaluation of school performance

## Inspection team

Lindsay Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- This school is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. This year there are no pupils in Year 6.
- Almost all the pupils attending the school are of White British heritage.
- There are no pupils supported through funding for the pupil premium (those eligible for free school meals, in the care of the local authority or with a parent in the armed forces).
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average, as is the proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A comparatively high proportion of pupils either leaves or joins the school at different points during the school year.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is comprised of one mixed-aged Reception and Nursery Class which is joined by a pre-school in the mornings. Most other pupils are taught in mixed-age classes except Year 5.
- There have been a number of changes in staff since the previous inspection and the headteacher has only recently returned after a period of extended absence.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more of the teaching outstanding by:
  - providing work which is demanding enough for those pupils who are more able
  - giving pupils more opportunities to use computers across all subjects
  - giving pupils time to respond to marking and setting and using individual targets for pupils, so that they know what they have to do to reach the next level in their work
  - implementing an effective programme for the teaching of handwriting so that most pupils have joined handwriting by the end of Year 2.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress in English and mathematics. Although class sizes and abilities differ on a yearly basis in this small school, by the time they leave the school attainment is usually above average.
- Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge typically expected for their age. The effective teaching and organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which runs alongside the pre-school group in the mornings, supports the good progress they make in all areas of learning. Children have particularly well developed personal and social skills. They readily share learning resources and take turns. By the time they enter Year 1 they have at least average skills and knowledge.
- The teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) is secure. In 2012 a higher proportion of pupils than the national average achieved the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Pupils are given daily opportunities to read and enjoy reading. Most read confidently and expressively. Younger pupils use phonic skills of blending and breaking down words to help them with their reading.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress like their peers and are given equal opportunities to access the curriculum. They benefit from being in the small classes and also receive high quality, individual support by capable teaching assistants.
- There has been a whole-school focus on writing, which is a strength across the school. Pupils are given many opportunities to write at length in a range of subjects.
- Presentation is generally neat, but handwriting is underdeveloped and only a few older children use joined handwriting. At present there is not a systematic approach to handwriting and pupils are not developing fluent joined handwriting early enough.
- Pupils make good progress in mathematics and there has been a focus on investigations and problem solving which is helping pupils to apply mathematical knowledge. The school places importance on continually reinforcing basic skills such as multiplication tables and calculation methods to support further work in mathematics.
- Although pupils are making good progress in most subjects there is not enough opportunity for pupils to work on computers, slowing progress in developing computer skills and researching things for themselves.
- All parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that their child is making good progress in school.

### The quality of teaching is good

- Teachers plan interesting tasks that motivate children to learn. Very little lesson time is wasted and expectations are high. In the Year 5 class, pupils were busy enjoying a practical task discovering the impact of insulators and conductors on an electric circuit. They were fully

engaged, keen to participate and making good progress.

- Teachers ask questions which challenge pupils to think and they make sure each pupil gets a chance to respond. In the Key Stage 1 class, pupils were keen to share their views about different ways of helping others, other than giving money to charity. The teacher challenged their answers encouraging them to think further and explain in detail, promoting the use of language and discussion.
- Teachers and teaching assistants work closely together. A range of measures is used to tackle any slow progress and very good guidance and support is given to pupils who need it.
- Books contain a high quantity of work covering all subjects showing that teaching has been typically good over time. It is regularly marked. Good work is acknowledged and praised and teachers give constructive comments to help pupils improve their work. However, there is very little evidence of pupils responding to teachers' marking, limiting its effectiveness. Pupils have started to use a traffic-light system for self-evaluation, putting a coloured dot by the title to indicate to the teacher how confident they feel about the work.
- Teachers keep detailed records of pupils' progress and their understanding of the work. This information is used effectively and there is usually a close match between the work set and the individual pupils' needs. However, occasionally the work set for more-able pupils is not sufficiently demanding.
- The use of individual targets for numeracy and literacy is not secure across the school. Pupils are not aware of the requirements of the different levels of attainment and are unsure of what they need to do to reach the next higher level in their work.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils** are good

- Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is above average. There have been no exclusions. They are expected to behave well and the large majority do so.
- Pupils feel safe and very well looked after in school and parents and carers who completed Parent View agree. This is because the school has a positive ethos and a welcoming atmosphere. Pupils are well briefed about how to stay safe in their everyday lives and understand about potentially harmful situations including the misuse of the internet and mobile phones.
- They have a good understanding of different types of bullying and know what action to take, should it occur. Pupils expressed strongly that they like their teachers and feel they can talk to any member of staff if they have a problem.
- Teachers and teaching assistants know each pupil well and establish good working relationships with their classes. They create a positive classroom climate and manage pupils' behaviour effectively. Almost all pupils behave well in lessons and have good attitudes to work. They work well with partners and in small groups and apply themselves diligently to the tasks they are set. Pupils are happy to contribute to lessons and listen well to each other.
- Parents and carers and staff support the view that behaviour is managed well in the school. School records show that there have been improvements in pupils' behaviour because of staff working closely with pupils and their families.

**The leadership and management are good**

- The headteacher and governing body work well together and are ambitious for the school's further improvement. They have a realistic and accurate view of how well the school is doing.
- The school engages well with parents and carers who are very supportive of the experienced headteacher and staff at the school. The school has organised workshops in mathematics and reading to help parents and carers support their children's learning as a means of strengthening the school's partnership with them.
- The quality of teaching and learning are regularly assessed through lesson observations and meetings held to discuss pupils' progress, and points for improvement are acted upon. Teachers' performance is managed effectively and a strong ethos for continuous school improvement is shared by all staff and is led determinedly by the headteacher.
- The school welcomes all pupils and promotes equality strongly. Discrimination is not tolerated. Pupils' views are listened to weekly in a special whole-school assembly when their suggestions are taken from the 'golden' suggestion box.
- Subjects and topics are broad and balanced and used to good effect in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school has a link with a multi-cultural inner-city school and older pupils are given the opportunity to visit it. They learn to celebrate their similarities and respect any differences in culture. During the year pupils have visited places of cultural importance such as Hatfield House and the British Museum.
- The headteacher has worked well with the local authority to support teachers' professional development. In particular, training related to the teaching of phonics and tracking pupils' progress has been effective in improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' attainment.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - Governors have a very clear understanding of the schools' strengths and areas for improvement and know what must be done to take the school forward. They have worked successfully to support the school in improving the climate for learning and ensuring efficient financial management of the school. Governors are clear about their responsibilities and make sure that staff and pupils are safe and all statutory requirements, including those relating to safeguarding, are met. They visit the school to meet teachers and to find out about teaching and learning. They have a clear knowledge of the day-to-day workings of the school and report back regularly to the full governing body. Most governors have attended training and know how to compare the schools' performance with that of other schools. They have worked with the local authority representative to set challenging targets for the headteacher based on pupil-tracking information and have an overview of performance management and salary progression for other staff. They know what the school is doing to reward good teaching and to tackle any underperformance.

## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117176
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	403307

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

<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	48
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	David Austin
<b>Headteacher</b>	Diane Penn
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 February 2008
<b>Telephone number</b>	01279 842681
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