

Woolston Community Primary School

Hall Road, Woolston, Warrington, Cheshire, WA1 4PA

Inspection dates 10–11 July 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Inadequate	4
	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

- Not enough teaching is good; there is too much which requires improvement and, as a result, too few pupils make above average progress.
- Too few pupils reach above average standards by the end of Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Middle leaders do not have sufficient impact on improving the quality of education in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Not all members of the governing body play a full part in improving the school.
- Recent improvements in teaching and the progress which pupils make show much promise for the future but it is too soon to fully evidence the impact on pupils' standards across the school.

The school has the following strengths

- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in the specialised provision, for pupils with special educational needs and for most pupils in Year 2 and Year 6.
- Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Their good attitudes to learning make a positive contribution to their learning and progress.
- Due to leaders tackling underperformance head on, teaching is improving rapidly and consequently the progress which pupils make is accelerating sharply across the school.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide a clear steer to the school's improvement. They are building an effective staff team.
- The Chair of the Governing Body and a core group of governors, provide effective strategic management to support and challenge school leaders.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons taught by 12 different teachers.
- Three groups of pupils met with inspectors. Discussions were also held with staff, including senior and middle leaders and a representative of the local authority. A meeting was held with the Chair of the Governing Body.
- Inspectors took account of 31 responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), and of 13 questionnaires completed by staff. Additionally, inspectors read four letters written by parents and carers and sent to the inspection team. By request, a telephone call was made to gather the views of one parent.
- Inspectors read a range of documents. These included information on the school's procedures for gaining an accurate view of its performance, improvement plans, pupils' current progress, policies and records on safeguarding, behaviour and attendance.

Inspection team

John Coleman, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector

Elaine Murray

Additional Inspector

Full report

In accordance with section 13 (5) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement.

Information about this school

- Since the last inspection the school has experienced significant instability to staffing. Several teachers have left the school, new teachers have joined and three new teachers have been appointed to start in September 2013.
- A new school is being constructed adjacent to the existing school and is due to open at the end of September 2013.
- The school is similar in size to most other primary schools nationally.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.
- The school operates a specially resourced provision for up to eight pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families and those children that are looked after, is lower than the national average.
- Almost all pupils are White British and the vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language.
- The school meets the government's floor standard, which is the minimum expected for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school has on-site private nursery provision, Playdays Pre-School and the Woolston Wasps Link Club, which is a private provider for before- and after-school activities. This provision was not part of this inspection and the reports for this are available on the Ofsted website.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment, particularly in mathematics and writing and so that pupils of all ages achieve well, by ensuring that:
 - the main tasks in every lesson are given most of the time available
 - work given to pupils always matches their varying needs and abilities and opportunities for pupils to learn independently are increased
 - teachers always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve so that pupils reach their potential
 - teachers are given the opportunity to share and observe good and outstanding teaching practice.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the skills and the roles of subject leaders so that they can make an effective contribution to evaluating the school's performance and improving the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement
 - providing training to develop the roles and skills of all governors so that they are all fully involved in helping to secure improvement and know precisely how to hold the school to account.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils made at least expected rates of progress and in around half of lessons they made good progress. Outstanding progress was observed in two lessons, one in Year 2 and one in Year 5. The improving rates of progress evidenced this year, and during the inspection, hold promise for the future, but pupils' achievement requires improvement because standards are not yet high enough for too many pupils, especially in writing and mathematics.
- Most pupils join the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge which are typical for their age. Due to good teaching, children in the Reception class make good progress in language and communication skills and in their personal development.
- In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make mostly average rates of progress because teaching over time has varied significantly. Progress is improving sharply due to improvements in teaching, especially in the latter half of this year.
- Standards are rising steadily. This can be seen in the outcomes of tests in Year 2 in 2013 which show that pupils reached a little above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. For the higher attainers too, the percentage reaching the higher Level 3 was above the national average. In Year 1, the percentage meeting the expected standards in the national phonics screening (the sounds that letters make), was above average and much improved from the previous year. In Year 6, standards are slower to rise, partly because of the legacy of underachievement over time. Even so, the unvalidated results of the 2013 national tests show standards which are broadly average, though too few pupils reached the higher Level 5 in reading, writing and mathematics. Given the starting points of this group of pupils 12 months ago, this represents greatly accelerated progress.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs including those in the specialised provision, and pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, make good progress. This is due to well-targeted teaching and very effective support from teaching assistants. The historic gap in performance between all pupils and those eligible for pupil premium funding, as measured by average points scores, has closed to the point where there is no difference in achievement.
- Pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics has improved markedly due to leaders' actions to improve teaching in these subjects. Over time, pupils' standards in reading have been higher because the teaching of reading was more effective. The impact of effective staff training and a sharper focus on teaching the skills of writing and mathematics has led to a rise in standards so that in 2013, there is less difference in pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1 and 2.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies. Most teaching either requires improvement or is good in roughly even proportions. A small amount of teaching is outstanding and inadequate teaching is rarely seen. However, there is not enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils make good progress.
- In lessons which require improvement, they are often characterised by common expectations for all pupils. This leaves some pupils disinterested because the work is too easy or quick to complete and other pupils frustrated because it is too difficult or time-consuming.
- Too few lessons provide enough opportunities for pupils to develop independence in their learning. Too often, teachers take too much time to get to the main task or activity. This results in pupils losing interest and the pace of learning slows.
- Similarly, a weakness of lessons which require improvement is the low expectations from teachers regarding how much progress pupils should make in a given time. In these lessons, teachers do not give pupils short, bite-sized tasks which can be quickly checked to see if pupils' fully understand, rather the task is lengthy and open-ended and the effectiveness of assessment

is weak.

- Typically, teaching is well organised and highly structured. Teachers plan lessons conscientiously and include specific objectives for pupils' learning.
- Classrooms are tidy, bright and are displayed with a good range of pupils' work which values their achievements and celebrates their successes. This is testimony to teacher's notable efforts to maintain an effective learning environment while in the final stages of the closure of the existing school building.
- Staff are enthusiastic about their work. Pupils say that they enjoy lessons and get on well with their teachers. These good relationships help pupils to learn.
- The very effective recruitment, training and deployment of teaching assistants result in good support and guidance for pupils eligible for pupil premium funding, for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. For example, pupils with hearing impairments are supported by a teaching assistant skilled in British sign language and this ensures such pupils are fully included in all aspects of learning and school life.
- Most teachers have a good understanding of the subjects they teach and use this well to impart knowledge to pupils. Effective questioning skills are evident among many staff and this challenges pupils to extend their understanding during lessons. Recent improvements to teachers' marking of pupils' written work, especial in writing, are increasing pupils' understanding of what they need to do to improve their work.
- In the best lessons seen by inspectors, pupils were given opportunities to find things out for themselves by investigating and exploring. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson aimed at teaching pupils to find fractions of whole numbers, the pupils began by quickly recapping on how to work out equivalent fractions. They then split into small groups with each having a separate task set at the right level of difficulty to capture their interest and extend their understanding. The teacher and teaching assistants moved around the groups providing specific guidance and prompts but allowing the pupils to develop their own ideas and thinking.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils show good attitudes to learning and this impacts well on their learning and progress. Staff treat pupils with respect and courtesy and in return pupils behave well and cooperate with each other.
- In lessons and around the school pupils are calm and considerate in their movements. Orderly lines of pupils are a common sight at the start of the day and at the end of break times. Staff supervise vigilantly. Pupils say they feel safe and are able to approach staff with any problems they may have.
- The older pupils enjoy being part of the buddy scheme which enables them to look after the younger children. Membership of the school council develops pupils' sense of community responsibility. 'Reading rockets' provide support for younger pupils from competent older readers.
- Pupils say that staff and pupils are friendly; they are proud of their school and think everyone is included. Several parents wrote to the inspection team voicing their praise for the school's work, especially for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. One typical comment states, '....everything is geared to making sure every pupil has the best opportunity to excel both in terms of their academic achievements but also in the holistic development of the individual and their ability to integrate into the wider world.'
- Pupils say bullying is rare and inspectors found little evidence to oppose this view. Pupils' attendance is above average and there have been no exclusions in 2013. Punctuality to lessons is good.
- Pupils learn about healthy eating, the dangers of drugs and alcohol and about internet and e-safety. There are a number of opportunities for pupils to play different sports.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The development of the middle leader roles in the school is at an early stage and the quality of monitoring and evaluation in non-core subjects requires improvement. While the leadership of English, and, to a lesser extent, mathematics, is well established, the coordination and leadership of other curriculum areas are embryonic. New roles and responsibilities have recently been created.
- The curriculum provides a wide range of opportunities for pupils including a range of enrichment activities such as trips to places of educational interest and through visitors to the school. Additionally, extra-curricular opportunities are available to extend pupils' learning. However, the impact on pupils' progress is not fully realised and requires improvement.
- The headteacher provides a clear direction for the school's improvement. He is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and together they form a resolute and determined partnership.
- The two senior leaders have tackled previous inadequate teaching with success. They have managed extensive staff changes and maintained morale while improving the school's performance. Suitable training is provided to help improve teaching though more opportunities are needed to enable teachers to learn from the best teaching practice in the school.
- Effective systems are in place for performance management and for senior leaders to monitor and evaluate the impact of actions to improve teaching and pupils' progress. Through this, leaders have an accurate understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision, although their judgements about the quality of teaching are a little overgenerous.
- Since the last inspection, and due to the impact of senior leaders' strategies, inadequate teaching has been practically eradicated and the proportion of good teaching has improved. As a result, pupils are making improved progress and standards are steadily rising. Also, pupils' behaviour, safety and personal development have improved and the new specialised provision for pupils with ASD has been successfully established. Taken together, this provides clear evidence of leaders' capacity to improve the school's performance.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The Chair of the Governing Body is knowledgeable about the school's performance. A core group of governors form the Warrington Improving School's Committee (WISC). Through this, they are well informed about the quality of teaching and data on the school's performance and provide a suitable level of challenge to school leaders. However, not all governors make an equal contribution to the strategic role needed to improve the school.
 - The local authority gives effective support to the governance and leadership of the school through a range of consultants and School Improvement Officers. Also, the local authority has brokered the support of a National Leader of Governance to commence September 2013 to strengthen the skills of the governing body.
 - All the requirements for safeguarding are met. Financial management is appropriately provided. Funds for pupil premium are carefully utilised and the impact of this analysed and published on the school's website. The outcomes for this group of pupils show notable improvement.
 - Performance management arrangements are suitably in place including for the headteacher, and the governing body employ an external advisor in this regard. Salary increases are dependent upon successful performance management outcomes.

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	111182
Local authority	Warrington
Inspection number	408891

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	252
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs C Shipton
Headteacher	Mr N Toyne
Date of previous school inspection	20 June 2012
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