

Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Watchlytes, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AZ

Inspection dates 20–21 November 2013

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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

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

- Over recent years, pupils have not made the progress they are capable of in reading and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The teaching of mathematics in Key Stage 2 has not been strong enough over time.
- Pupils' basic skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are below average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Recent results show not enough pupils have reached the levels they need in all subjects to prepare them well for the next stage of their education.

The school has the following strengths

- The standards that pupils achieve across Key Stage 2 are improving rapidly. Pupils are making faster progress in all year groups.
- Pupils make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 have improved since the previous inspection.
- The teaching of phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) is very effective and pupils achieve above-average skills in Key Stage 1.
- Pupils are extremely well behaved and enjoy school. They are confident and have very good speaking and listening skills.
- The headteacher, leaders and managers are a united team who are successfully raising standards across all year groups currently in the school.
- Progress is good in writing in Key Stage 2.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes, visiting 25 lessons and part lessons and observing all teachers. Three lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the headteacher and other leaders and managers, as well as representatives of the governing body and of the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school’s development plan, records of the governing body meetings, safeguarding arrangements and work in pupils’ books.
- Parents and carers were asked for their views at the beginning and end of the school day and the views of the 27 who contributed to the online Parent View survey were analysed.

Inspection team

Simon Griffiths, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Margaret Eldridge-Mrotzek	Additional Inspector
Fatiha Maitland	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is average. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for pupil premium funding is similar to the national average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, children who are looked after by the local authority, and some other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make sure that teaching is always good and a higher proportion is outstanding by ensuring that:
 - better use is made of assessment information to plan activities which match pupils' abilities, particularly the more able, in every lesson
 - subject leaders regularly visit classrooms and check standards.
- Raise attainment in Key Stage 2 by ensuring that:
 - the quality of marking and feedback in mathematics is improved so pupils know exactly what they have to do to improve
 - calculation and skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation are thoroughly understood so that pupils can tackle more challenging work with confidence
 - reading skills are taught systematically and consistently in Key Stage 2
 - leaders use assessment information more effectively to check progress in all classes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Results in the Year 6 tests have been broadly average overall in each of the years since the last inspection. Over the last two years, by the end of Year 6, pupils have reached levels which are below average in mathematics. They were also a little over a term behind pupils nationally in the most recent results in reading. The latest results show that a below-average proportion of pupils have achieved the expected skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar although the proportion reaching the higher levels is average.
- Fewer than average pupils reach the expected levels in each of the core skills of reading, and mathematics. Pupils in Year 6 last year had lower starting points at the end of Key Stage 1 than those now being achieved, and began Year 3 with below-average standards. That means that these pupils made better progress in Key Stage 2 than the group who left in 2012.
- Children join the school with skills and knowledge which are at least in line with those expected for their ages. They settle well into Nursery and quickly develop their language and mathematical skills. In Reception, interesting and carefully chosen activities ensure that they leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills that are above average across all areas of learning.
- Pupils make rapid progress with their skills in phonics (the linking of letters and sounds) in Year 1. This is because they are taught systematically. A higher-than-average proportion of pupils reach the expected levels and more-able pupils move quickly on to improving their reading and writing skills.
- In two of the last three years, results at Key Stage 1 have been above average and well above in writing, although they were average in 2012. The latest results were higher than those at the time of the previous inspection.
- Standards in writing are above average. Progress is good in writing because pupils' well developed speaking and listening skills ensure that they have a wide vocabulary and their enthusiasm for learning enables them to write interesting and lively pieces.
- Pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding generally make similar progress to other pupils. The latest results show that there was a gap of approximately a year in mathematics and writing compared to other pupils but the gap was closer to two years in reading. The gaps in attainment did not narrow in 2013, but this particular group included a large proportion of pupils who had special educational needs.
- The school assessments show that pupils in each of the years are now making much better progress than in the past. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 have made more progress than is expected from the time they left Key Stage 1. Pupils are now entering the top years with higher levels than previously. The work in books and the progress in lessons confirm this improving picture.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have typically made progress which required improvement, like their classmates. However, 2013 results show their progress was good. More-able pupils make good progress in writing but fewer reach the higher levels in mathematics and reading. Pupils from minority ethnic groups make good progress.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching over previous years has not been strong enough in Key Stage 2 to ensure that pupils make good progress in all subjects.
- Teachers have not focused so effectively on the teaching of mathematics and reading as they have on writing.
- Marking of writing is thorough, although the correction of spellings is not consistent. The marking of work in mathematics is not as strong. Books are marked regularly but the comments made do not always help pupils to understand how to improve further.
- More-able pupils are not always expected to do work that is much harder than that of other pupils and, sometimes, the middle ability pupils are also capable of doing more than is asked of them. Occasionally, pupils are not absolutely clear on what is expected of them.
- Teaching is improving and enabled pupils to make much better progress across the school last year. This was confirmed in lessons observed and in pupils' books, as well as by improved progress in the national assessment results for Year 6 in 2013.
- Teaching in the Nursery provides activities which develop children's skills, and good questioning and prompting helps them improve their language and mathematical skills. The teacher and the teaching assistants in Reception work very well together as a team, know the children's needs well and give them a variety of purposeful activities to ensure good progress.
- The teaching of phonics is particularly effective. Pupils are taught systematically in small groups. Lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to sound out and practise sounds and link these to letters. Their progress is checked carefully and, when they are ready, they move on to small writing groups. Reading at Key Stage 2 is not taught systematically enough.
- The teaching of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is effective and now enables them to make good progress in lessons. Teaching assistants usually give pupils good support. Teachers and leaders know individual pupils well and understand their needs. Careful thought is put into their activities.
- Teaching is improving, so that much is now good and some is outstanding. Teachers make lessons interesting and enjoyable. In one lesson, pupils had to persuade others to 'visit a country' of their choice before writing adverts, blogging on the computer and then using film.
- Teachers are good at checking how well pupils are getting on and often stop lessons to make sure that pupils understand before moving them on. This works well because pupils are keen to learn and listen carefully to how they can improve.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour in lessons is exemplary. This is because expectations of behaviour are very high. Pupils listen carefully to the teachers, are keen to answer questions, and take part in class discussions. They work together confidently in pairs and groups but are also able to concentrate well when working alone. Even when teaching requires improvement, they behave well.
- Pupils behave very well around the school. They are calm and courteous, and they talk to

visitors confidently. Playtime and lunchtimes are enjoyable and supervisors are able to talk with pupils happily and calmly.

- Pupils know about the different forms of bullying. Older pupils say there is very little, if any, bullying. A small minority of pupils and parents mentioned bullying but confirmed that it was soon sorted out.
- Pupils feel very safe around the school. They say this is because the teachers care about them and they particularly like the fact that the headteacher is always around the school at playtimes, lunchtime and the start of the day.
- Pupils are now securely gaining effective skills for learning because the improving teaching requires them to work well in groups and individually, and also to explain their ideas in front of others. They do this extremely confidently and articulately.
- Attendance has been below average but is improving and has recently been above average. Pupils know it is important to attend school and be there on time.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher successfully led colleagues in raising standards in Key Stage 1 and has focused since on improvement at Key Stage 2. Progress has improved in all year groups, including the most recent school leavers. The school assessments show that pupils are now entering Year 6 having attained higher levels in mathematics.
- The headteacher is well supported by the deputy headteacher and senior leaders. They know there needs to be further improvement in mathematics, reading and spelling, and are clear on actions to be taken, including more effective use of the improved data. They have identified a lack of sufficient opportunities to check how well subjects, such as reading, are being taught.
- There are clear and helpful systems to improve teaching. Lesson observations are accurate and focus on the progress being made by pupils. Teachers have clear targets and support to help them improve their teaching. They welcome these and find them helpful.
- The local authority provides appropriate support. The school adviser is new but the headteacher reports the level of support and challenge has been good. There are good partnerships with other schools and the school has a good relationship with parents, who say the school staff are very approachable.
- The school improvement plan is detailed and identifies the correct priorities for the school, of raising standards in mathematics and reading, and closing the gap between the attainment of pupils supported through the pupil premium and their classmates. The pupil premium funding has been used to provide extra teaching and, as a result, the progress of these pupils is accelerating, although the latest Key Stage 2 results show the gap is still wide.
- The school ensures that pupils study interesting and exciting topics. Termly themes and interesting visits and visitors deepen the pupils' understanding and capture their interest. There are good opportunities for music and technology.
- Sport is a strong feature of the school and pupils successfully takes part in a wide variety of local

competitions. The new sporting premium funding is well used to provide extra coaching for a wider range of sports, such as tag rugby, as well as training for the teachers.

- Pupils' global awareness and understanding of other countries and cultures are good and have improved from the time of the previous inspection, when these were identified as areas to improve.

- Safeguarding arrangements meet requirements.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- Governors are proud of the school. They are keenly aware of the need to improve results at Key Stage 2. They have made the need to close the gap between the results of disadvantaged pupils and others a priority in the school improvement plan. They understand the data about pupils' progress that is available and use it to ask searching questions of the school's leaders. They value the fact that the headteacher welcomes this challenge. They know about the quality of teaching because they visit the school regularly to observe learning and have an accurate overview of targets set for teachers. They ensure that the performance management arrangements are rigorous and that teachers' pay is linked to their pupils' achievements. They carry out their statutory duties effectively. Governors are themselves very well led and are passionate about the school's development, and determined to work in partnership with the headteacher and all staff to bring about further improvement.

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	117348
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	425424

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	259
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil Nash
Headteacher	Andrew Farrugia
Date of previous school inspection	8 November 2010
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