

Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Watchlytes, Welwyn Garden City AL7 2AZ

Inspection dates 20–21 January 2016

Overall effectiveness **Good**

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school has improved since the last inspection. Senior leaders have sought advice and training which they have used well. As a consequence, issues identified for improvement in the previous inspection have been put right.
- Leaders have identified the school's strengths and weaknesses. The actions they have taken are improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, which are now good.
- At the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, attainment of pupils has continued to rise. In 2015 this was above the national average.
- An increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress in reading and mathematics. However, progress in writing is less positive in the school, and particularly in Key Stage 1.
- Phonics is taught well. As a consequence, pupils' gains in the Year 1 phonics check have continued to be above the national average in 2015.
- The majority of teachers use questioning well to assess pupils' developing skills. Teachers set work at the right level to ensure that pupils make good progress. However, there is sometimes not enough challenge for the most-able pupils.
- The roles of some leaders are still developing. As a consequence, good practice is not always shared effectively, particularly in the teaching of writing.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted. Staff plan an interesting and varied curriculum that fosters respect and values difference.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils' relationships with each other and with adults are very supportive.
- Governors take their responsibilities seriously, are regular visitors to the school and provide an increasing level of challenge to the school's leaders.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Provision in the early years is not yet good enough. Teachers do not routinely use assessment information to ensure that good progress is made.
- Pupils in Key Stage 1 do not have enough opportunities to practise their basic English skills in writing.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of pupils who are making more than expected progress in writing by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan activities for pupils to write at length across the curriculum
 - pupils have regular opportunities to practise their basic skills in writing, particularly in Key Stage 1
 - pupils are involved in planning their next steps in learning, particularly the more-able pupils
 - pupils in Key Stage 2 make good use of authors' effective techniques in their own writing.

- Improve provision and progress in the early years by ensuring that:
 - parents and staff contribute to an accurate assessment of children's development when they join the school
 - teachers regularly check on children's progress to plan for the next steps in their development
 - children have more opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills
 - children have regular access to the outside learning area.

- Strengthen leadership roles to sustain improvement of the school by:
 - fully developing leadership skills and widen some leaders' involvement across the school
 - ensuring that middle leaders routinely monitor and evaluate their area of responsibility to identify and share good practice
 - providing professional development for support staff that is linked to school priorities.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- Leaders and governors have worked well together to bring about improvements since the last inspection. They have successfully made some key appointments, which have added to creating a culture of high expectations now evident in good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Leaders have successfully tackled any poor teaching. As a result, teaching is good and an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress.
- The headteacher has introduced a comprehensive system for tracking and recording pupils' progress. Regular checks on progress through looking at pupils' work, assessing their understanding and talking with pupils ensure that leaders are able to identify pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Appropriate support is given to pupils to ensure that they make better progress. As a result, all groups of pupils make increasingly good progress.
- All adults tackle rare instances of discriminatory or prejudiced behaviour robustly and successfully.
- The new curriculum is effective in developing pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Interesting themes make good links between some subjects; in particular, mathematics, science and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, the theme of King Arthur encouraged high-quality and reflective writing through pupils imagining that they were on 'the ship of doom'. One pupil wrote 'as my weary body collapsed into the lush, emerald green grass, a sense of pride consumed me'.
- Staff promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very effectively. This is because pupils are taught about tolerance, difference and respect and are able to apply this understanding confidently to a range of situations. One pupil stated 'intolerance results in friends falling out' and another, in the Key Stage 2 assembly, said 'terrorism can be an extreme intolerance'.
- The school's use of the primary sports premium funding has increased the range of sporting opportunities available to pupils, and has resulted in greater pupil participation in sports and competitions against other schools. Teachers' confidence in delivering physical education has been developed by, for example, the appointment of a sports apprentice. As a consequence, teachers are more adept at teaching related aspects like healthy eating and what helps promote general good health.
- Leaders, including governors, ensure that the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is used with increasing effectiveness. Until recently this has been largely for pupils who are at the end of either Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. However, the support that is now offered is much more evenly planned across the school for all pupils. As a result, the gap between these pupils and their peers currently in the school is closing.
- A majority of parents responding to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, say that the school is well led and managed. All staff responding to the staff questionnaire agree with them.
- The local authority, an external consultant and local primary schools provide effective support to help to continue to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the accuracy and reliability of the school's self-evaluation processes.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors effectively support and challenge leaders. This is evident in pertinent questioning of senior staff and has undoubtedly helped to improve the school since the previous inspection.
 - Governors have continued to strengthen the way that they check the school's work and have a secure knowledge of its strengths and areas of development. For example, governors make frequent visits to observe pupils' learning and receive regular evaluations of school performance from the headteacher. However, the new chair of governors recognises that the current system to record the evidence of impact on whole school improvement is not as robust as it could be.
 - Governors keep a close watch on how funding, such as the pupil premium, is used to improve pupils' progress and have checked how sports premium funding is effectively deployed.
 - Governors have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact on outcomes for pupils. Governors know about the management of teachers' performance and the links between this and teachers' pay progression. Working with the local authority's support, governors have put in place similar robust arrangements for evaluating the headteacher's annual performance.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders and staff work closely with a range of external personnel to ensure that pupils are safe. All staff receive regular training on aspects of safeguarding,

including how to identify whether pupils are at risk and to report any concerns. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to Parent View say that their children feel safe at school and are well cared for.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- Leaders have been successful in improving the quality of teaching since the previous inspection, which is now good. This has ensured that an increasing proportion of pupils make good progress in many areas of the curriculum. Teaching is typically stronger in Key Stage 2 than in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- A strong feature of teaching is the very positive relationships between adults and pupils. There is a purposeful atmosphere for learning, with pupils establishing cooperative relationships with other pupils. For example, in one Key Stage 1 mathematics lesson, a pupil was trying to add two numbers together. When she could not manage on her own, she turned to her partner 'because I didn't have enough fingers on my own'.
- There are high expectations of behaviour and the vast majority of pupils have good attitudes to learning. Pupils enjoy sharing their ideas and effectively challenge each other when working in pairs or groups. This is particularly well developed in mathematics.
- Pupils say that teachers make learning 'fun and exciting'. This is evident in lessons and in the work displayed outside of classrooms. Teachers generally have good subject knowledge and have the confidence to allow pupils to challenge them, test out their own thinking and then check their findings. This was evident in a history lesson. Pupils were trying to 'beat the teacher' to solve a question. They excitedly worked together and decided that the best way was to 'ask open-ended questions to catch him out'.
- The school's chosen assessment system is developing and teachers are largely using it consistently throughout the school. Where teaching is at its best, teachers use questioning skilfully to check pupils' understanding and reshape tasks to reflect the needs of the class. Pupils respond very keenly to the challenge that this can present. For example, in one lesson pupils were learning about how to make up with their friends if they fall out. Through pupils acting out scenarios, good opportunities were given for pupils to think about how they would feel if they were to 'walk in the other person's shoes'. Pupils' responses were inspiring. One said, 'it helps us to understand their sadness and frustration'.
- Leaders have put in place new expectations of teachers' marking and feedback. It is recognised that this is still developing and is not yet as consistent as it could be across the school and between subjects. However, where it is applied well and in line with leaders' expectations, teachers are helping pupils to improve their work and pupils are responding well.
- Overall, teaching assistants work very well with pupils who have particular needs. This is because teachers put aside time to ensure that support is matched well to individual pupils. As a result, these pupils make progress that is similar to their peers. The deployment of teaching assistants for pupils who need to catch up is less effective in a minority of classes.
- The teaching of mathematics and science is good. The skills, knowledge and understanding in these subjects are applied increasingly well as pupils move up through the school. The teaching of reading is undergoing significant change. Key Stage 1 teachers are developing confidence in the delivery of the school's chosen scheme for reading and phonics. As a consequence, the teaching of phonics is good. However, the opportunities that pupils are given in a small number of classes, to read to and be taught reading by an adult, are variable. In the majority of classes these opportunities are regular and of good quality, ensuring that pupils' reading progress is better than in other classes.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are respectful and caring of each other, play well together and cooperate with each other when playing games. Two pupils explained eloquently how they were 'very pleased to be thinking of others who are less fortunate than us' outside of the school community. For example, the school raises money for the

British Heart Foundation and Water Aid.

- Pupils feel safe and well cared for. Staff and parents agree. Pupils know who to go to if they need to and are confident that staff will not tolerate any language or actions that might be offensive. Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe and know about, for example, safety when using the internet. Understanding of safety is supported by visitors to the school, including a local police officer and the 'Think You Know' road safety campaign.
- Pupils are aware of the various forms that bullying can take, including cyberbullying. Pupils say bullying is rare, which is also evidenced in the very few incidents recorded in the school's behaviour records.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive in lessons. They are willing to help each other, for example when working with a partner or in small groups. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are keen to learn, explore and investigate and reflect the school's slogan to 'become the best you can'.
- Pupils enjoy learning about life in modern Britain. Mirroring the democratic process, they hold elections to be members of the School Council and are very proud of this additional responsibility. They understand the rule of law and explain that 'we need rules outside of school just like we have rules in school'. They know about tolerance, saying 'everyone is tolerant; they respect each other and what they think'. As a consequence, pupils are well prepared for the part they play in the wider community.
- Leaders promote well pupils' all round spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The variety of themes that are taught explore different cultures and religions. Pupils are given many opportunities to consider the feelings of others. Welcome signs are displayed in different languages and pupils learn about what people eat in other countries, for example by making such foods as maize flour tortillas when learning about the Mayan community.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good around the school and in the playground.
- Expectations about how everyone should behave are made clear and are understood by the pupils 'because teachers explain them to us'. Poor behaviour is rare and pupils are confident that staff 'will sort things out' if it occurs.
- The vast majority of pupils are keen to learn, behave very well in lessons and there is little interruption of learning. Very occasionally, some pupils lose their concentration, especially if they are unsure about what to do.
- Pupils are kind, friendly and polite to each other. They hold doors open for others, help younger pupils in the dining hall and listen considerately to their peers and adults.
- Leaders encourage pupils to attend school regularly and on time. Pupils say they enjoy school 'because it is fun' and 'we can be with our friends'. As a result, attendance is at the national average.
- The vast majority of parents and staff responding to the Ofsted online questionnaires agree that pupils' behaviour is good and managed well by staff and leaders.

Outcomes for pupils

are good

- Pupils' achievement has risen since the previous inspection and is good. Improvements in teaching are leading to pupils making better progress.
- The school's own information shows that an increasing proportion of pupils are making good progress in reading and mathematics. Progress is slower in writing and particularly at Key Stage 1, as was confirmed by the work seen in pupils' books and in visits to lessons across the different year groups.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2015 was significantly above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Overall, pupils made good progress.
- Pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 has continued to rise since the previous inspection and, in 2015 was above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. The few disadvantaged pupils attained less well but made similar progress to their peers.
- The most-able pupils are largely challenged well in lessons, and the school's own assessment information confirms that they are making good progress in reading and mathematics. This is because of the increasingly good teaching across the school of these subjects. In 2015, the proportion of pupils who attained the higher levels at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in mathematics was much improved on 2014 and was significantly above the national average.

- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make at least expected progress in reading and mathematics. An increasing proportion of disadvantaged pupils and those pupils who have fallen behind and need to catch up in their learning are making good progress.
- At the end of Year 1 in 2014 and 2015, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected level in phonics was above the national average. This is because the teaching of phonics has improved. Pupils' knowledge of the sounds that letters make is helping them to read well and pupils say that they enjoy reading.
- Attainment in writing throughout the school is not good as good as it should be. This is because teachers do not routinely plan opportunities for pupils to write at length and in subjects other than English. At Key Stage 1, pupils do not write regularly enough to practise their phonics knowledge and skills. As a consequence, their progress in writing is slower than it should be. The more-able pupils in Key Stage 2 are not well challenged, involved in planning their own learning or applying their varied skills in their writing.
- Leaders have focused on the development of mathematics in the school and teachers' subject knowledge is good. As a consequence, pupils' attainment and progress across the school in mathematics is good. Teachers increasingly challenge pupils through problem-solving activities, which pupils clearly enjoy and which was evident in lessons seen during the inspection.
- Achievement across many subjects of the developing new curriculum is good. Overall, pupils are well prepared for secondary school. They develop particularly good skills in science, physical education, art and music because teachers plan innovative activities as part of the year group themes.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. Teachers do not routinely use assessment information well to plan learning for the next steps in children's development. As a consequence, not enough children make good progress from their starting points, and, in particular, the most-able children.
- Most children enter the early years with skills that are typical for their age, although a minority experience some difficulties in speaking and some aspects of personal development.
- In 2015, a larger proportion of children achieved a good level of development by the end of the Reception year than seen nationally. The small number of disadvantaged children generally made good progress. However, there has not been an increase in the proportion of pupils making good progress from their varying starting points.
- Children's speaking and listening skills develop faster in the Nursery than they do in Reception. This is because there are not enough opportunities for children to talk about their learning in the Reception class. Consequently, adults miss opportunities to develop children's communication skills and to help them think about what they are learning.
- Boys do not always do as well as girls, particularly in writing and physical skills. Leaders have taken some action to address this and have improved the outdoor area to further support boys' learning. However, teachers do not plan enough opportunities for children to explore the outdoor environment. For example, during the inspection, children only used the outdoor area during play and lunchtimes.
- Relationships with parents are developing well. In order to ensure that parents are well informed about their child's progress, leaders have introduced an online system of communication between parents and teachers. This is beginning to help teachers have a better understanding of each child's needs when they start at the school, and one upon which teachers can build further development. A display showing children's 'wow moments' is key to capturing aspects of the children's development that contribute towards them achieving well. For example, one wow moment states that '...wrote mummy, daddy and nanny all by himself'.
- The children's welfare and safety are given high priority and, as a result, children are happy, safe and growing in confidence.
- Leaders have a developing view about the strengths and areas for development in early years. Leaders use additional funding effectively to close gaps in achievement between disadvantaged children and their peers.

School details

Unique reference number	117348
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10001912

This inspection 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	276
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Neil English
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Andrew Farrugia
Telephone number	01707 886222
Website	Watchlytes.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@watchlytes.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	20–21 November 2013

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 proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average. The proportion with a statement of special educational needs or an Education Health Care Plan is average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 12 lessons, the majority of which were joint observations with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made shorter visits to lessons and attended an assembly.
- Inspectors heard some pupils read from Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of the senior leadership team. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Governing Body and five other governors, groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.
- A range of evidence was examined, including the school's self-evaluation and development plans, the systems to track pupils' progress and policies and records relating to behaviour and attendance. Inspectors also looked at records of the monitoring of teaching, performance management information, safeguarding documentation and samples of pupils' work.
- The Parent View online survey response of 52 parents and 23 staff who completed the staff survey were taken into account.

Inspection team

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