

Woodlands Infant School

Woodlands Lane, Shirley, Solihull, West Midlands B90 2PX

Inspection dates

30–31 January 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Weaknesses in leadership and management, which are reflected in the overall effectiveness judgement of requires improvement, have not yet had a sufficiently negative impact on other aspects of school provision, which remain good. Recent improvements to leadership and management are not rapid or secure enough.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness is not accurate. Development plans do not fully reflect the school's key priorities.
- The work of governors is not strategic enough. They have insufficient opportunity to contribute to the school's self-evaluation process.
- High staff turnover and a period of change and instability have resulted in a decline in standards. The morale of some staff is low. Some staff do not value aspects of the training and development they receive.
- Aspects of safeguarding practice and training require improvement. They have recently improved but are not yet fully embedded and are not monitored rigorously enough.
- Some teaching assistants are not deployed effectively across key stage 1. The teaching of phonics and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is not of a consistently high standard.

The school has the following strengths

- Staff are committed to securing improvements and want the best for pupils. They have a wide range of skills and expertise and have the capacity to remedy any shortcomings.
- Leaders ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced, the quality of teaching is good, and pupils make consistently strong progress.
- Additional funding is used effectively to support vulnerable pupils and develop physical education and sports provision.
- Pupils' behaviour is good, they are positive about school and look forward to learning. However, pupils' behaviour at social times can be boisterous.
- Although pupils' attendance is above the national average, systems to monitor any absence could be enhanced further.
- Early years is well led and means children get off to a great start in the school. The learning environment in the Nursery is not as strong as in the rest of early years and the process of risk assessment requires greater rigour.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - actions taken over the last year to remedy shortcomings in safeguarding practice are fully embedded and monitored rigorously
 - leaders engage more effectively with staff and respond more to any feedback and concerns
 - self-evaluation is a more accurate assessment of current circumstances and development plans fully reflect the school's key priorities
 - governors adopt a more strategic role and have more opportunities to contribute to the development of the school's self-evaluation and resulting development plans.
- Further improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and thereby pupils' outcomes, by making sure that:
 - staff training opportunities further target the school's key priorities and are valued by staff
 - some teaching assistants in key stage 1 are given further training to enhance their delivery of phonics and the support they offer to pupils with SEND.
- Further improve personal development, behaviour and welfare by ensuring that:
 - breaktimes have greater supervision and structure so that pupils' behaviour is as good as that found during lessons
 - systems are established to monitor the attendance of key groups or persistent absentees so that any emerging trends or patterns can be acted upon.
- Further develop the early years by:
 - making improvements to the environment in the Nursery so that it is appealing and conducive to learning
 - ensuring that risk assessments are reviewed with greater frequency and take account of all areas of learning in the early years foundation stage.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders have introduced a range of new strategies and changes over the last 18 months. These changes have been introduced with good intentions but have not been managed effectively and the resulting improvements have not been rapid or secure enough. Change has been coupled with high staff turnover and adjustments to teaching arrangements across the school. These factors have strained relationships and have had a negative effect on the school's overall effectiveness. As a result, standards dipped in 2018, particularly in key stage 1.
- The morale of some staff is low. Some staff do not feel that they have been adequately consulted about changes that have been implemented. Conversely, some staff state that they feel well supported. These mixed feelings have hampered school improvement.
- Leaders' self-evaluation of the school is not accurate. Though the school has many strengths, there is work to do in ensuring that the training teaching assistants receive in key stage 1, enables them to improve their delivery of phonics and the support they provide for pupils with SEND. Development plans do not fully detail how the teaching of phonics will be further improved.
- Leaders do give teachers regular feedback, arrange visits to other schools to share practice and provide opportunities for staff to coach and support one another. This support has ensured that the impact teaching has on learning remains at least good. However, some staff do not value the training they receive through weekly staff meetings.
- In 2018 the local authority was notified about potential concerns regarding the effectiveness of safeguarding and leadership. Prior to this point, contact between the local authority and the school had been limited. Officers have worked with leaders and governors to address concerns but there is further work to do. The local authority is committed to offering further support and is clear about the improvements required within leadership and governance.
- The curriculum has been reviewed and offers pupils a rich range of experiences. Important concepts and ideas are linked across different subject areas. As a result, pupils make good progress across the curriculum. For example, in Year 2, pupils learn about London and discover a range of important historical and geographical facts. Pupils use this knowledge to draw comparisons with their own local area of Shirley.
- The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities and wrap-around care. Leaders are particularly proud of the sporting opportunities that are planned for pupils. An increasing number of pupils have attended competitive events with other local schools. In 2018, the school won a local award that recognised pupils' excellent sporting attitudes and spirit of 'fair play'.
- Additional funding is spent appropriately to support the achievement of disadvantaged pupils. Though attainment was lower for this group of pupils in 2018, current progress is much stronger. Leaders track pupils' achievement closely and respond quickly if they identify any gaps. However, the school's strategy could be clearer about the barriers to

learning that these pupils face.

- Pupils receive a programme of personal, social and health education that supports their development. Pupils learn about fairness, respect for others, celebrate important events and visit places of worship. The school's vision states 'We value the powers of positivity, respect, kindness and effort'. These values are evident in this inclusive school.
- Most parents hold positive views about the school. A small number of parents raised concerns about the quality of contact that they have had with staff. Of the 83 respondents to Parent View, the vast majority feel that pupils are taught well, and 93% would recommend the school to another parent.

Governance of the school

- Governors have worked closely with leaders to manage a period of instability and unrest. Governors:
 - have undertaken an audit to establish their collective strengths and any gaps in skills
 - have developed the extent to which they offer challenge and support to leaders through governing body meetings
 - have a clear overview of the school's assessments systems and how these are used by leaders and staff to plan schemes of work and establish additional support
 - have not developed an adequately strategic approach to school improvement
 - are familiar with the school's self-evaluation and development plan but do not have enough opportunities to contribute to the development and content of these key documents.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Though the wider culture of safeguarding is now secure, improvements have been necessary. The local authority has worked with the school to advise on training needs and safeguarding procedures. Although recommendations have now been acted upon fully by leaders, systems still need to be embedded and monitored rigorously.
- Leaders have established more effective ways of sharing information and recording any concerns about pupils. Current record systems are fit for purpose and show the actions that leaders take if they have a concern about pupils' welfare.
- Risk assessments are not reviewed with adequate frequency and do not take full account of all the areas of learning in the early years foundation stage. While no pupils are at any immediate risk of harm, a more rigorous approach would ensure that any potential risks are minimised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Despite shortcomings in the school's overall leadership, teaching is good at Woodlands. Staff are diligent and want the best for pupils. There are frequent opportunities for staff to share practice within their phases and learn from one another. Teachers carefully plan sequences of learning that are matched to pupils' needs. As a result, outcomes are generally strong across the whole school.
- Pupils enjoy warm and positive relationships with staff. The quality of the curriculum and daily lessons ensure that pupils are engaged and interested in their learning.
- Assessment information is used effectively to identify any patterns in pupils' performance. Leaders and teachers work together to make sure that judgements are accurate. For example, staff cross-check assessment information against pupils' work in books, and the long-term targets for pupils' learning. Consequently, information about pupils' performance is reliable and is used effectively to support teachers' planning.
- During the inspection, pupils were engrossed in their topic 'Mountaineering'. Pupils climbed an imaginary mountain to reach the summit of Everest in the school hall. They made intelligent observations about the climate and geography of the imaginary land. Activities like this are common place in the curriculum. Teachers invest much time in planning learning that supports the development of pupils' core skills. This also gives pupils an insight into the world around them and important historical figures.
- The teaching of phonics is well organised. Pupils are split into groups according to their needs and are taught in a systematic and organised way. The school has a number of phonics experts who are able to share their skills and constantly develop practice. As a result, outcomes in phonics are strong and have been above national levels for several years. Some teaching assistants are not as confident or skilled in the delivery of phonics. They require further training to ensure that their approach is consistent with that found across the school. This weaker support limits the progress that pupils make, particularly those with SEND. Furthermore, some of the books that pupils take home are not closely matched to the sounds that pupils are learning. This is unhelpful and hampers progress.
- Although pupils with SEND make strong progress, the quality of the support they receive from teaching assistants could be improved further. On occasion, inspectors observed teaching assistants offering pupils too little or too much support. This area for improvement has been identified through leaders' own monitoring and forms part of the school's current development plans.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Most pupils are confident and self-assured. Pupils want to do the right thing and are keen to please.
- Pupils have been taught different ways to help them be successful learners. For example, they understand the importance of not giving up and spotting opportunities where they can help one another out. As a result, pupils are resilient and enjoy their learning.

- The curriculum supports pupils' personal development through frequent opportunities to learn about staying safe. These include learning about e-safety, workshops from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children's 'PANTS' campaign, and an anti-bullying week.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Staff have developed effective strategies to ensure that pupils' behaviour is well managed. Pupils raised no concerns about behaviour or bullying during the inspection.
- With the exception of the Nursery, the school environment is bright and appealing.
- School records show that any incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Leaders do not keep a check on the attendance of key groups. Any patterns or trends for different year groups or persistent absentees are not fully understood or analysed. However, attendance rates are above the national average, and leaders monitor any individual absence that causes a concern.
- Pupils' behaviour during breaktimes is not as good as in lessons. Play can be boisterous. There is a lack of structure and organisation in the playground. Too many games and activities take place at the same time in a small place. This results in bumps and unnecessary accidents.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2018, outcomes dipped at the end of key stage 1, particularly in reading and writing. Prior to this, outcomes had been consistently strong. Staff turnover and shortcomings in leadership have had an impact on standards. The progress that pupils currently make is not as strong as it might be.
- Some aspects of school performance remain strong. For example, in recent years, the proportion of pupils reaching a greater depth in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of key stage 1 has been above national.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils were lower in 2018, but pupils currently on roll are making stronger progress. This is as a result of careful tracking and strong teaching.
- Pupils' books show that good progress is being secured, but standards could be higher. In particular in key stage 1, there is some variability in the teaching of phonics and the support for pupils with SEND.
- Pupils make strong progress across the curriculum. Teachers plan imaginative topics and make thoughtful links between different subjects. As a result, pupils are able to practise their basic skills and acquire new knowledge.
- By the time pupils leave Woodlands, they are well prepared for learning in key stage 2.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years is well led. Early years staff are organised and passionate about what they do. Provision is effective across Little Squirrels (the school's wrap-around care),

Nursery and Reception.

- From the moment children join the school, they begin to make progress. Children's learning journals evidence the high expectations staff have of them. Children quickly learn to read and write.
- Teaching is very good, particularly the organisation and delivery of phonics. Phonics teaching is of a consistently high standard. Children enjoy practising new sounds. They use their phonics skills to successfully read a wide range of words.
- Children's behaviour is excellent. They are engrossed in their learning and are keen to share what they do. During the inspection a group of pupils had constructed a diplodocus in the outdoor play area. Inside, children were writing about dinosaurs and using a range of resources independently.
- A high proportion of children reach the expected standard by the end of Reception. As a result, children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leaders' plans for developing early years are focused on staff training and development. Though this is important, key priorities, such as speaking and physical development, are not identified in similar detail. It therefore makes it difficult for governors to fully track improvements.
- The environment in the Nursery is not as appealing as that found in the Reception classes and Little Squirrels. Work has been undertaken to develop this area in the last 12 months but there is more to do. In particular, some resources are too high, certain areas need repainting and the entrance is untidy.
- Risk assessments are not reviewed as frequently or as rigorously as they could be in some parts of the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	104053
Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	10084452

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	222
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Interim chair	Rani Kaur
Headteacher	Chris Reilly
Telephone number	0121 744 2840
Website	www.woodlandsinfantschool.co.uk
Email address	office@woodlands-inf.solihull.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	5–6 February 2013

Information about this school

- Woodlands is smaller than the average-sized infant school.
- A new headteacher and chair of governors have been appointed since the last inspection.
- The school's wrap-around care is called Woodlands Childcare and contains two separate services: 'Wraparound' which is before- and after-school child care, and 'Little Squirrels', which is the extended Nursery provision.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for the pupil premium and those with SEND is below average.

Information about this inspection

- The inspection was carried out following a complaint made to Ofsted, which raised serious concerns. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an inspection should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether the school remained outstanding and whether safeguarding was effective.
- Inspector observed teaching in every class. Almost all observations were undertaken jointly with leaders.
- Inspectors spoke to staff and pupils throughout the inspection.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the governing body and two local authority officers. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with Solihull's assistant director for learning and skills.
- Inspectors reviewed feedback from the 83 respondents to Parent View.
- Inspectors reviewed pupils' work across the curriculum.

Inspection team

Jonathan Keay, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Michael Appleby

Ofsted Inspector

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