

Widford School

Ware Road, Widford, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 8RE

Inspection dates

26–27 June 2019

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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The recently appointed headteacher leads the school with high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Since her appointment, she has quickly improved the quality of the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Pupils have positive attitudes and conduct themselves well, as they enjoy school.
- Safeguarding is effective and meets requirements. Pupils feel and are safe because of the care they receive.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge to good effect. This ensures that pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding across many subjects.
- The headteacher, staff and governors work well together to ensure that pupils make good progress across all classes.
- Teaching assistants are effectively deployed to support all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Pupils can talk about their learning across a range of subjects that develop their interests and expertise.
- The leadership of the early years is strong, including provision for two-year-old children. Children in Nursery and Reception receive a good start to their education. The strength in teaching and the standard of care enable them to make good progress.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education and fundamental British values well. In addition, pupils reflect the school's values.
- Parents and carers recognise and welcome the improvements in the school since the headteacher's appointment.
- Many subject leaders are new to their roles. With good-quality training and development, they are improving their skills and expertise.
- Leaders' plans to develop the classroom and outdoor environments to provide accessible opportunities for learning for all pupils are well under way.
- The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn to write in a range of subjects. However, pupils do not use their writing skills enough to deepen their knowledge and improve their vocabulary across all subjects.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - building on the skills and expertise of subject leaders so they improve the quality of teaching and raise standards in their areas of responsibility.
- Improve teaching and learning by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills that deepen their knowledge and widen their vocabulary across all subjects
 - completing improvements to the classroom and outdoor environments to provide accessible opportunities for learning for pupils across the school.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The recently appointed headteacher has high expectations of all pupils. Since her appointment, she has worked with determination to improve the quality of the curriculum, teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Leaders promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness and fundamental British values well. For example, pupils benefited from historical and cultural interests and learning through trips to the Royal Gunpowder Mills and the Celtic Harmony Camp.
- Leaders have developed a curriculum that is broad and balanced. Pupils show a range of interests and can talk about their experience of learning across a range of subjects. Last year, leaders used the additional funding for disadvantaged pupils to improve their attainment, progress, and attitudes to learning. Leaders also invested in strategies to build pupils' resilience and support pupils' emotional health and well-being. As a result, disadvantaged pupils now typically make good progress in their reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have made use of the sport premium and the pupil premium to fund extra-curricular resources and participation in inter-school events. The school now offers a wider range of activities to inspire more pupils to play sport.
- Pupils with SEND are well looked after and cared for. The special educational needs coordinator is knowledgeable about the needs of pupils and ensures that their emotional and social needs are well met within a nurturing environment. As a result, pupils with SEND typically make good progress in their work.
- Leaders have been active in inviting external scrutiny of the quality of pupils' work. The local authority has provided this support and provides an objective view of what the school is doing well and the areas to improve upon. Leaders now set clear priorities in line with their accurate self-evaluation.
- The school keeps parents well informed about what is going on. All parents who met with the inspector or responded to the online survey, Parent View, agreed that their children were happy and safe in school and were well cared for. One parent wrote, 'The school has such a family feel that the children care for and look after each other.'
- Parents continue to say they feel their children are well prepared for their secondary education.
- All teachers are now subject leaders and are relatively new to their roles. The local authority supports the school by helping a range of external partners to provide good-quality training and development. Consequently, teachers' confidence has risen and they are beginning to develop their skills and expertise across many subjects by meeting regularly to review pupils' work. However, this work is at an early stage, so curriculum planning in subjects such as French and geography are not yet as developed as they are in mathematics and English.

Governance of the school

- Governors are ambitious for the school's continuing improvement, 'giving all children the skills they need'. There have been changes to the governing body since the previous inspection, including the election of a new chair of governors.
- After a review of governance supported by the local authority, governors have taken swift action to resolve issues of governance and leadership. Governors are now providing a better standard of support and challenge to hold school leaders to account. For example, governors now monitor the impact of actions to improve the outcomes of disadvantaged pupils with additional funds.
- Governors use their knowledge of the school from a range of sources to make strategic decisions that will bring about further improvement, for example building on subject leaders' skills and expertise.
- Governors regularly visit the school and know the staff and pupils well. They have undertaken a safeguarding audit and undertake their full safeguarding statutory responsibilities.
- Parents told the inspector they have full confidence in the governing body to continue to bring about improvements.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The headteacher is the designated safeguarding lead and trained school leaders deputise this role. They work together to ensure that staff receive training that enables them to identify potential signs of abuse or neglect. Staff understand the procedures for the protection of pupils and any concerns are acted upon appropriately.
- All statutory requirements are met. Systematic checks are made on adults who work in or visit the school. Importantly, all pupils, parents and staff say that the school provides a safe, nurturing environment.
- Clear and comprehensive record-keeping supports work with external agencies appropriately. Secure systems adopt a team approach, involving governors, leaders and office staff, to ensure that all pupils are kept safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through focused training and effective management of teachers' performance.
- Teachers use their subject knowledge confidently. This ensures that pupils deepen their knowledge and understanding across many subjects. Teachers stated that recent curriculum development in mathematics had supported them in determining the next steps for all pupils, including the most able.
- Pupils are given many opportunities in mathematics and science to solve problems and explain their reasoning in their written work.
- The teaching of phonics develops pupils' early reading skills. Teachers encourage

reading across the curriculum and pupils say that they enjoy reading.

- Teachers ensure that older pupils read appropriately challenging texts for their age. Pupils that were heard reading to their teacher talked about how they enjoy reading because of the range of books available to them.
- Pupils are given opportunities to edit and redraft their writing in their history work. For example, pupils were observed writing fictional diary extracts in key stage 2 from the perspective of child evacuees in the Second World War. Pupils used dictionaries and thesauruses to add greater sophistication and depth to their work.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support all pupils, including those with SEND. Additional adults provide pupils with a range of physical resources that help support the development of early mathematics.
- While there are some examples of teachers developing pupils' writing across different subjects, they do not develop pupils' writing skills sufficiently to deepen their knowledge and improve their vocabulary across all subjects.
- Teachers are continuing to develop the classroom and outdoor environments to provide accessible opportunities for learning for pupils across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are proud to support the community and reflect the school's 'TERRIFIC' values. For example, pupils told the inspector of their pride in taking part in a range of charity events and local athletics competitions.
- Pupils learn how to be good citizens and contribute to developments in the school. They gain a good understanding of their responsibilities through the school council, assemblies and involvement with local village events, such as the Christmas Bazaar.
- Pupils understand how to eat well and stay fit and healthy. Year 6 pupils are proud to begin the school day by leading a short dance routine, where pupils of all ages can practise exercises to help them keep fit.
- Daily assemblies promote the school's values and use collective worship to reflect the school's vision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, using their favourite stories linked to the curriculum, and consideration of real-life choices, pupils considered aims and values central to the ethos of the school to kindle tolerance and regard for others.
- Pupils are taught how to stay safe, including road safety and being approached by strangers. They know how to stay safe when online because teachers remind them of what to look for and how to report concerns to an adult when using the internet.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils enjoy breaktimes and lunchtimes and are well supervised. They play well

together and are friendly and polite. Older pupils enthusiastically support younger children in playing with the sports and climbing equipment.

- School leaders, including governors, have taken action to improve attendance, which is now broadly in line with the national average. Very few pupils are persistently absent.
- School records relating to behaviour show there have been no reported incidents of bullying or exclusions this year. Pupils and parents agree with the school's view that pupils are encouraged to be independent, to take on responsibilities and to treat one another with kindness and respect.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and instances of off-task behaviour are rare.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- As cohort sizes are small, there have been fluctuations in outcomes over the past three years. However, current pupils in key stage 1 make good progress in reading and writing. Progress in mathematics is not quite as strong. In key stage 2, pupils have made good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science over time.
- Pupils' work, including the work of most-able pupils, shows strong progress in almost all subjects and year groups due to the improvements in the quality of education they receive.
- As this is a very small village school, the number of pupils with SEND or disadvantaged pupils can be very small. Because of this, it is difficult to identify trends for particular groups of pupils. Scrutiny of current pupils' work shows that disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND make good progress due to the effective teaching they receive.
- Pupils use their early phonics knowledge to use their letter sounds to write simple words and phrases. Pupils read well because they gain a secure foundation in the basics early on. As their reading develops, pupils enjoy the opportunity to read aloud to adults and access a wide and interesting range of texts and genres. This prepares them well for their secondary education.
- Pupils' books in key stage 2 show that punctuation and spelling in pupils' extended writing are not as strong as in their other work.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and the quality of teaching and learning in the Nursery and Reception are strong, including the provision for two-year-old children from the start of this academic year.
- Leaders carry out effective self-evaluation, working with local partnerships to drive improvements that ensure pupils are keen and ready to start a smooth transition to Year 1.
- Staff work well with parents to welcome new children into the school so that children quickly become calm and confident learners.
- Staff understand the children well when they start school. Parents contribute to their children's learning journals to continue to develop children's knowledge, skills, and interests. The dialogue between home and school continues throughout the early

years. This helps to ensure that the assessments of children's learning and development are accurate.

- Safeguarding for the early years, including provision for two-year-olds, is effective.
- Accurate assessment on entry helps staff to identify the next steps for children who need additional support. As a result, all children make good progress from their individual starting points. Teachers use assessment information well to plan activities that are appropriately challenging.
- Consistently good phonics teaching and early reading in the early years now mean that more pupils reach the required standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check.
- Teachers use questioning to support children in their early understanding of mathematics.
- Adults support children to make use of the resources, often linked to their favourite stories, which encompass different areas of learning. For example, children were sharing their favourite superheroes with the inspector, which they were using in their role play and in their writing. Children showed skill in moving around safely, balancing and climbing on obstacles and equipment.
- Children behave well and are keen to learn and develop strong relationships with staff and peers. They reflect the example of older pupils, both within the mixed-age class and at lunchtime. They mix well with others and happily play and learn together.
- Children start Reception with individual skills and abilities that are generally typical for their age. Attainment has continued to rise since the previous inspection and the proportion of children who reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is above the national average.
- The outdoor areas enable children to enjoy their learning across all areas of the curriculum.
- Leaders have expanded the Nursery this year to include two-year-olds, and these children have begun to build their confidence and form positive relationships with other children by enjoying their favourite stories and rhymes together.

School details

Unique reference number	117176
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10088655

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	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	43
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Parrott
Headteacher	Catherine Cooper
Telephone number	01279 842681
Website	www.widford.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@widford.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	2–3 February 2017

Information about this school

- This is a very small village school with four mixed-age classes from 2–11 years. The school has expanded its Nursery provision this year to include two-year-olds.
- The headteacher and chair of the governing body have changed since the previous inspection. All teaching staff now undertake leadership roles in the school.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of pupils who are eligible for additional support from the pupil premium funding is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils with SEND is below the national average; a very small proportion of pupils have an education, health and care plan.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has sought continuing support from the local authority.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in all classes and over a range of subjects. Most of these observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher, which included scrutiny of a wide range of pupils' work.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, subject leaders, governors, a representative for the local authority and a group of pupils. A telephone conversation was also held with the chair of the governing body.
- The inspector analysed and evaluated a range of documentation, which included information about pupils' attendance, achievement and behaviour records, school self-evaluation and improvement planning, safeguarding, the curriculum, governor meetings and the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The inspector observed pupils' behaviour before school, in lessons, at lunchtime and breaktimes, as well as around the school site.
- The teaching of phonics and early reading was observed.
- Pupils were observed reading to their teacher from their favourite books.
- The inspector considered the 18 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as 17 free-text comments. The inspector also spoke to some parents at the school entrance one morning. The inspector also took account of the views of pupils and staff from online surveys and discussions over the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Sean Powell, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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