

# Inspection of Watchlytes Primary School

Watchlytes, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 2AZ

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Inspection dates: 28 and 29 September 2021

## **Overall effectiveness**

**Inadequate**

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The quality of education

**Inadequate**

Behaviour and attitudes

**Inadequate**

Personal development

**Requires improvement**

Leadership and management

**Inadequate**

Early years provision

**Requires improvement**

Previous inspection grade

Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils at Watchlytes Primary School are not receiving an adequate education. Pupils are not having access to an ambitious curriculum designed to meet their needs. The school's curriculum does not help pupils to build depth of knowledge in a wide range of subjects.

For too long, the most vulnerable pupils have not received the support they need to help them attend school and achieve well. Not all pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) get the support they need to make at least good progress from their starting points. In addition, pupils who struggle to read do not receive the necessary support to catch up quickly. These are often the most vulnerable pupils.

Early years staff are only just seeing positive results from recent improvements. This year, most children from Nursery have moved into Reception ready to learn. Children have settled quickly. They build their knowledge because the curriculum is planned well. However, leaders' curriculum plans beyond Reception have not been well considered. Plans do not ensure that children will continue to develop these skills to be successful in Year 1 and beyond.

Most pupils behave well. In lessons, some pupils disengage and become restless. Pupils say that bullying does not happen. They are confident that adults in school will help them if they have concerns.

Pupils are happy and say that they feel safe. Pupils told us that they enjoy physical education. They appreciate the extra-curricular activities on offer at lunchtime and after school. Most parents and carers are happy with what the school provides. Staff say that they are proud to work at the school.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The headteacher has been in post since 2018. He has addressed some of the weaknesses since the previous inspection. Leaders do not have development plans in place that will support school improvements. Leaders cannot articulate a strong vision. Leaders cannot demonstrate that they have the capacity to improve standards at Watchlytes. This is because leaders have not identified precisely what the school needs to do to help improve the quality of education.

Leaders' curriculum plans for most subjects lack coherence and clarity. Plans do not specify what leaders want pupils to know and by when. Leaders cannot provide a clear rationale for the plans currently in place. This means that pupils have jumbled and disjointed experiences when learning. Teachers do not have the information they need to plan a sequence of lessons. As a result, pupils do not remember important knowledge.

Chosen schemes for English and mathematics are better sequenced. However, teachers do not teach in line with leaders' intentions. Leaders have allowed teachers too much freedom to choose what they want to teach. As a result, pupils do not deepen their knowledge and understanding in these subjects.

The early years reading curriculum details what children should know and by when. Children have many opportunities to hear language through listening to stories. They develop language through a range of purposeful activities. This ensures that children develop firm foundations for reading and writing. However, leaders have not ensured that this practice carries on into key stage 1. The process for passing on information is weak. Children who struggled to read and write in Reception do not catch up quickly enough in Year 1.

Until recently, pupils with SEND have not had their needs identified quickly enough. Pupils with speech and language needs now receive precise support. The special educational needs coordinator has ensured that all education, health and care (EHC) plans are in place. The targets on EHC plans do not always match the support pupils are receiving. Leaders do not have an accurate view of how well pupils are achieving or the impact of support.

Leaders' systems for supporting pupils' positive behaviour and poor attendance are weak. Systems do not support disadvantaged pupils to attend school all the time. The new behaviour policy is not applied by all staff. Staff do not always address low-level disruption in line with leaders' expectations.

Teachers support pupils' personal development through a range of activities. Pupils learn about democracy when they apply to be on the school and eco council. They know about different faiths and say that it is important to be kind to everyone. Pupils take part in harvest festival and charity and local community events. Personal, social, health and economic education plans are in place. However, plans are new and have not been fully implemented.

Leaders and governors have not been strategic in their actions. They have not addressed weaknesses in the quality of education. Staff professional development is not planned to support school improvement. Other systems are not rigorous to ensure that pupils attend school and behave as well as they could. The local authority has provided helpful recommendations that leaders have not yet implemented. The local authority will continue to support school leaders and governors.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that pupils are safe at Watchlytes. They keep detailed records about any concerns. Leaders keep a close check on pupils who are most vulnerable. Leaders carry out all statutory checks on employees. There were some administrative issues that leaders rectified during the inspection. Leaders make sure that staff attend regular safeguarding training and read the necessary

documentation. However, leaders do not have ways to check that staff understand this information. School-wide policies about, for example, sexual harassment are in place. Leaders have not implemented these policies yet.

## **What does the school need to do to improve?**

### **(Information for the school and appropriate authority)**

- Leaders and governors' school development plans do not specify what the school needs to do to improve, particularly in relation to the quality of education. This means that the school is not improving rapidly. All leaders need to identify the school's key priorities first and foremost. This will ensure that teachers have a clear understanding about what needs improving. In addition, plans need clear actions to address the weaknesses so that governors can confidently hold school leaders to account for their actions.
- Leaders have not planned a coherent curriculum that starts in early years and builds on pupils' learning across the school. This means that knowledge gained in the early years is not built on in key stages 1 and 2. Leaders have not identified what pupils need to know in many of their curriculum subjects. This means that pupils do not experience a sequenced and coherent curriculum that develops their understanding. Plans for all curriculum subjects need to precisely specify what leaders want pupils to learn. Plans need to be well sequenced so that pupils build on prior knowledge and develop a secure understanding of each subject during their time throughout primary school.
- Leaders have not ensured that the teaching of early reading is well planned. Pupils who struggle, particularly those who are disadvantaged, are not given the additional support to catch up quickly. This means that too many pupils are not reading confidently. As a matter of urgency, leaders should ensure that all pupils who need to catch up are supported to read fluently quickly.
- Leaders do not have a secure understanding about the provision for pupils with SEND and how well they are achieving. This means that pupils with SEND are not achieving as well as they should. As a matter of urgency, leaders need to ensure that pupils with SEND are given the precise support they need to make progress from their starting points. In addition, leaders need to ensure that they check the impact of support routinely.
- Leaders do not follow up pupils' attendance rigorously. Pupils' attendance is not high enough. This is having an impact on pupils' achievement, particularly those who are disadvantaged. Leaders must ensure that strong systems are in place to help pupils attend school all the time.
- Leaders provide pupils with a wide range of activities to support pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. However, although plans are in place, teachers have not started to implement them in a structured way. As a result, pupils' personal development is not good. Leaders must ensure that plans are implemented fully so that pupils learn the fundamentals of what it means to be a good citizen in modern Britain.

Leaders and those responsible for governance may not appoint early career teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

## **How can I feed back my views?**

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

## **Further information**

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	117348
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10199594
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	222
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Alex Graham
<b>Headteacher</b>	Alan Gardiner
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.watchlytes.herts.sch.uk">www.watchlytes.herts.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	20 January 2016

## Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there have been two temporary headteachers. The current headteacher has been in post since 2018.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. They held a meeting with two members of the governing body, including the chair of

governors. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority.

- Inspectors took account of a wide range of information, including the school's self-evaluation and improvement plans, records of pupils' behaviours and curriculum plans. School policies, documents and records relating to safeguarding, including the single central record and governor minutes, were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site. They also reviewed records of behaviour and attendance and other information provided by school leaders.
- Inspectors took account of seven responses to Ofsted's staff survey, 21 responses to Ofsted's free-text parent survey and Ofsted Parent View, and 33 responses to the pupil survey. They also spoke with several parents on the second day of the inspection.
- The subjects covered in depth as part of this inspection were reading, English, mathematics, history and geography. In each subject, inspectors spoke with subject leaders, teachers and pupils. Inspectors visited lessons and looked at pupils' work.

### **Inspection team**

Cindy Impey, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Daniel Short

Her Majesty's Inspector

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