

# Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Watling Lower School

Bull Pond Lane, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 3BJ

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Inspection dates:

17 and 18 December 2024

## Outcome

Evidence gathered during this ungraded (section 8) inspection suggests that aspects of the school's work may not be as strong as at the time of the previous inspection. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

## What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils at Watling Lower School are keen to share their ideas and thoughts. This shows that they have self-confidence. Many pupils and staff members have developed positive relationships. This helps pupils to understand that they can rely on staff for guidance and help.

Teachers expect pupils to behave well and, most of the time, they do. The youngest pupils have learned the school routines well and this helps them to feel secure. Throughout the school, staff want the best for pupils and show them care and consideration. Pupils know this, and trust that adults will keep them safe.

Pupils enjoy taking on extra responsibilities. They are keen to use these to help others, demonstrating their caring nature. Additionally, pupils learn about various religions and cultural icons. Through this, they learn to show compassion and understanding for others, and they understand the importance of celebrating differences.

Many pupils work hard and enjoy learning. However, the work that pupils complete sometimes does not align with the learning intention. This can hinder their ability to retain information. In addition, in some subjects, checks on teaching are not thorough. The school does not take swift action when it identifies ineffective approaches, so pupils do not learn as well as they could.

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

In most subjects, the curriculum outlines what pupils need to learn and when. This helps teachers know what to teach and in what order, so that pupils' knowledge develops

sequentially. However, staff do not consistently create tasks that fully match the knowledge that pupils are intended to learn. As a result, some learning activities do not help pupils retain or build on knowledge, leading to gaps in their understanding.

Children in the early years are well cared for. They interact well with each other and show important independence skills. However, the school does not ensure that children develop their language skills well enough. In some activities, children have fewer opportunities to expand their vocabulary. As a result, they are not as well prepared for their next stage as they should be because language development is the foundation for many skills.

The school prioritises teaching pupils to read. Staff know how to teach phonics well because they have received appropriate guidance and support. Any pupils who need keep-up sessions have these provided for them. The school ensures that pupils learn to read using phonics, as this helps them to be able to read widely. To this aim, older pupils who need more practice get the time and support they need. This includes pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). As a result, pupils learn to become fluent and confident readers.

Pupils with SEND have their needs accurately identified. Parents and carers, pupils and staff help with this. Together, they write individual plans for those who require support. This enables staff to know how to help pupils succeed in their learning. While pupils with SEND make progress from their starting points, they do not achieve the level of progress they are capable of due to the weaknesses in the overall quality of education provided by the school.

Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and pupils typically display good behaviour. Staff often try to make learning enjoyable, which helps pupils stay focused. In the playground, pupils play cooperatively and typically get along with one another. There are now robust and effective procedures to ensure pupils attend school regularly.

The school holds mini elections to choose the members of the school council. This helps pupils learn about fundamental British values and democracy. Pupils know how to stay safe online and in the community. They also enjoy the trips and visits that staff organise. This helps them learn more about other aspects of the curriculum, such as through visits to historic sites. Additionally, pupils learn about the diverse world that they live in and know to respect others.

The school has improved certain areas of the curriculum, for instance in reading. However, it does not monitor the teaching approaches in all subjects effectively and make changes where these are not working as intended. As a result, some aspects of the intended curriculum do not impact positively on pupils' learning. This means that pupils do not learn all of the intended curriculum securely. Governors have also identified some concerns regarding the quality of education in particular subjects. The school is small and many staff members have a wide variety of roles, which the governors assert makes it harder to effect change as rapidly as they would like.

Leaders and governors ensure that staff feel supported. They are considerate of staff's well-being. Parents are also happy with many aspects of the school's provision for their children.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

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

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

- Sometimes, learning tasks do not help pupils to consolidate their understanding. This means that some pupils do not retain all the knowledge that the school intends, and they have gaps in their knowledge. The school should ensure that all learning tasks help pupils remember the knowledge they are intended to learn.
- There is not a strong enough focus on children's language development in the early years. This means that staff do not help children learn a broader vocabulary, and children are not as well prepared for the next stage of learning as they could be. The school needs to ensure that the language development of children in the early years has a well-considered approach that is understood and followed by all staff.
- The school does not know if teaching approaches in some subjects are effective. This means it does not swiftly implement necessary changes when the implementation of the curriculum is not effective. The school should ensure that teaching approaches are effective in all subjects and provide staff with the guidance and support they need to enhance these where they prove to be ineffective.

## **Background**

Until September 2024, on a graded (section 5) inspection we gave schools an overall effectiveness grade, in addition to the key and provision judgements. Overall effectiveness grades given before September 2024 will continue to be visible on school inspection reports and on Ofsted's website. From September 2024 graded inspections will not include an overall effectiveness grade. This school was, before September 2024, judged to be good for its overall effectiveness.

We have now inspected the school to determine whether it has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at that previous inspection. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school's work has improved significantly or that it may not be as strong as it was at the last inspection, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection. A graded inspection is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the second ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in September 2015.

## **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.

## **Further information**

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	109499
<b>Local authority</b>	Central Bedfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	10345086
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	2 to 9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	206
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Adam Hughes
<b>Headteacher</b>	Robert Cook
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.watlinglower.org.uk">www.watlinglower.org.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	21 February 2019, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school has provision for two-year-olds.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspections are a point-in-time evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and has taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders and staff. The inspector also met with representatives from the governing body, including the chair.
- The inspector visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered

the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

- The inspector considered responses to Ofsted Parent View, including free-text responses. They also considered the responses to Ofsted's online staff and pupil surveys.

### **Inspection team**

Jessie Linsley, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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