

Inspection of a school judged good for overall effectiveness before September 2024: Widford School

Ware Road, Widford, Widford School, Widford Herts, Hertfordshire SG12 8RE

Inspection date:

25 February 2025

Outcome

Widford School has taken effective action to maintain the standards identified at the previous inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are energised by the changes in their school. The newly established federation is making a substantial difference to their experiences of education. Pupils appreciate the extra opportunities that additional resources bring. They appreciate that with more staff they can do more things, such as visits to Duxford war museum and attendance at theatre workshops. One pupil, who echoed the views of many, described the school as being on an 'uphill trajectory'.

The revamped curriculum and a reset of expectations are bearing fruit. Pupils are thoroughly enjoying their learning, especially the practical elements of the curriculum, such as creating fake blood to demonstrate the circulatory system. They like the fact that they must think more, work harder and take care with their presentation of ideas. Thus, they are achieving well.

Pupils behave considerately to staff and towards each other. They listen closely to what they need to do in lessons and support each other's contributions. They are proud to share in the joy of everyone's achievements, for instance in the weekly assemblies. Older pupils look after their younger peers. They make sure that younger voices are heard when they make decisions that affect the school via school council.

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

The school is in the process of combining with another. As a result, it has reviewed its curriculum in readiness for the move from teaching mixed-age classes to that of single. Staff from both schools have looked carefully at what pupils know and can do. To facilitate a seamless transition some units of work in the curriculum have been swapped around. Pupils are learning the key knowledge they need to know for the new curriculum. Staff

have also aligned the way in which they check pupils' progress in their work. This means that pupils understand clearly what they need to do to improve their work. Staff are readily addressing any gaps in knowledge and understanding that pupils may have.

The school places a sharp emphasis upon the development of pupils' language and communication skills. Staff model talk effectively to children in the early years. Children copy how to ask questions and how to use their manners when making requests. They are encouraged to use bigger and better words in their speech. This is built upon in later years where pupils learn subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils use terms, such as those found in mathematics, with confidence and understanding. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) benefit from the oral rehearsal of key ideas before they begin a task.

Staff are getting to grips with the delivery of a new phonics programme. They are manipulating the programme's digital resources with greater confidence. Staff use their expert knowledge of teaching phonics to reinforce the programme's teaching points. For instance, staff ensure that children in early years know how to use their tongues to create the sounds they need to recognise. Investment in new resources means that pupils read books that match the sounds they know. Pupils who find reading difficult get the help they need to catch up. Older pupils value and enjoy reading. They read widely and often.

Increased staffing has created greater capacity to quickly identify and support pupils with SEND. Where needed, pupils receive specialist support for their speech, language and communication needs. Pupils benefit from one-to-one bespoke support. The improvement in pupils' individual plans means that teachers are clear about what works well to help pupils learn in the classroom. The adjustments they make help pupils with SEND access the curriculum alongside their peers. The increase in pastoral support for pupils is helping them to learn independence in a nurturing environment.

Provision for pupils' wider development is a key priority. Pupils access a range of enrichment activities which complement the curriculum as well as broaden their horizons. A recent visit to a local polo club, for example, helped pupils to understand how to run a business as well as learn forestry. Pupils have a comprehensive understanding of diversity and different religious beliefs. They respect views that are different to their own. Pupils have an age-appropriate understanding of how to be safe online as well as in the wider community.

The management of the federation of two schools has been handled exceptionally well. Leaders at all levels are clear about the steps for change. They have looked closely at the impact of their work, including workload demands, and have adjusted actions as needed. Governors have kept a close eye on school improvement. This includes the actions taken to improve attendance. While there have been strides forward, there is still work to do to ensure that pupils regularly attend school.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The school's strategies for raising the attendance of some pupils are taking time to have the desired impact. When pupils do not attend school, they miss out on important learning and find it more difficult to catch up. The school should renew its efforts to work with families to remove barriers to pupils' attendance.

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 first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good for overall effectiveness in June 2019.

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

Unique reference number	117176
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10345172
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	47
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chairs of governing body	Mike Newman (co-chair) Sarah Gardiner (co-chair)
Headteacher	Jonathan Millward
Website	www.widford.herts.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	26 and 27 June 2019, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school formed a federation with another school in September 2024. At this time, the headteacher from the federated school joined Widford School. Leadership at all levels, including governance, now runs across the two schools.
- From September 2025 the federation will move to single-age rather than mixed-age classes. Widford School will be the site for early years provision and key stage 1.
- The school does not use alternative provision.

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. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with representatives of the governing body, including the co-chairs, the headteacher, special educational needs coordinator and staff.
- The lead inspector spoke with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors considered the improvements leaders are undertaking in the school, such as the management of the new federation.
- Inspectors visited a sample of lessons, spoke to some pupils about their experiences of school and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during their social time.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors: 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.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the Ofsted Parent View questionnaire and parents' free-text comments. They also took account of the responses to the Ofsted staff survey. Inspectors gathered the views of pupils formally in groups as well as informally throughout the day.

Inspection team

Liz Smith, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Craige Brown

Ofsted Inspector

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