



Woodlands Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 118431
LEA Medway
Inspection number 280313
Inspection dates 19 June 2006 to 20 June 2006
Reporting inspector Liz Kounnou Al

This inspection was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary	School address	Woodlands Road
School category	Community		Gillingham
Age range of pupils	4 to 11		Kent ME7 2DU
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01634 338778
Number on roll	200	Fax number	01634 338779
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair of governors	
Date of previous inspection	25 September 2000	Headteacher	Mr N Fiddaman

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is an average-sized primary school situated in Gillingham. It serves an economically disadvantaged area and provides a range of extended services, including a Community Arts Centre. Although the majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds, about 10% are from varied other ethnic backgrounds. A very small proportion of pupils are learning to speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much higher than average at around 41%. When children start school in the Reception class, the majority reach standards that are well below those expected for their age. Over a third of pupils on roll did not join the school at the normal time. These pupils, with a range of different abilities, joined most year groups from Year 2 to Year 6.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school that provides excellent value for money and is committed to further improvements. The school is more modest in its own evaluation of the quality of education provided. This is because school leaders have very high expectations for pupils and, as a result, the capacity for even further improvement is extremely good. Outstanding leadership and management have provided the school with much additional funding, for example, from lottery grants. This has been used wisely to create a superb range of resources for learning. Pupils have access to a well furnished theatre, dance studios, high quality ICT resources and a wealth of sports facilities. The local community regularly uses many of the facilities. The school has been very successful in its drive to involve more parents in school life. There has been good improvement in the quality of education in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection so that it is now good, with well thought out plans firmly in place to improve outdoor provision even further from September. Children achieve well in the Reception class but many do not reach the levels expected for their age.

The result of all this work is that over the last three years pupils in this school have made excellent progress in English, mathematics and science, more than pupils in most other primary schools. This is due to the outstanding care, guidance and support that children receive. This excellent guidance helps pupils to develop extremely positive attitudes to learning. Their personal development is outstanding. However, most pupils do not know enough about the many different cultures represented in Great Britain. Exceptional teaching and learning regularly captures pupils' interest and ensures that pupils enjoy their lessons. Parents and pupils speak very highly of their school. Pupils particularly appreciate the high quality resources and equipment available for them, and parents are pleased with the well-rounded education their children receive.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the quality and range of opportunities for pupils to learn about the contribution of all cultures to the diverse society in Great Britain.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make excellent progress in English, mathematics and science. From a low starting point, standards in Year 6 are above average in English and science, and average in mathematics. This splendid achievement is due to outstanding care for the pupils, consistently good teaching that has many excellent features, and the determination of the whole staff to help all children do as well as they can. There has been significant improvement in English and mathematics standards since the last inspection. A lot has been done to raise standards in Years 1 and 2. This year, pupils have done very well, with an above average proportion reaching the expected standards in mathematics. Standards in reading and writing are below average in Year 2, but pupils make consistently good progress. Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress

now compared with the last inspection, because the curriculum has been reviewed to provide a wider range of exciting activities. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the few pupils learning to speak English as an additional language, do just as well as all the other pupils, making rapid progress. Boys and girls do very well because they are interested in their work and proud of their achievements. More able pupils are challenged really well, and learn how to work things out for themselves.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils develop personal skills at an extraordinary rate. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. The considered way that teachers value pupils' questions and ideas allows them to develop respect for themselves and others. Pupils exercise responsibility extremely well, and can resolve conflicts themselves. Pupils' understanding of their own culture is good but they do not know enough about the contributions that other cultures make to Great Britain. Their behaviour in classes and around the school is outstanding. Pupils say that this is a friendly school and they love coming. Attendance is good.

The school council are democratic and very effective in influencing the school's improvement. These pupils are proud of the initiatives that they have suggested, and other pupils fully understand that their views will be represented well. Pupils know the importance of staying safe, keeping fit and a healthy diet, and the school does everything it can to support this. Pupils enthusiastically develop key skills that will help them later in life. Opportunities to work and think things through independently and in small groups pepper the curriculum. Literacy, numeracy and basic ICT skills are all given a very high priority.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are outstanding overall, and most effective in Years 2, 5 and 6. Throughout the school, lessons are enjoyable for pupils who consistently say that they have a lot of fun in lessons. As a result, they make outstanding progress in their personal development as well as in their academic achievements. In the Foundation Stage, children develop personal and social skills exceptionally well. Teaching in all classes is characterised by very high expectations, and underpinned by very good relationships. This develops pupils' self-confidence well so that they readily contribute to most lessons. Pupils say that teachers always explain things clearly so that they understand what they need to do. They value the help that teachers give them to improve their skills in literacy and numeracy.

Teachers are good at using information they gain from regular assessments of pupils' progress to tailor lessons to match the pupils' needs. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities receive excellent support from the efficient team of support staff, as do the few pupils learning to speak English as an additional language. A few pupils struggle to settle down to school life and they are also given full support. The challenging targets that are set for pupils throughout the school help them to make at least good progress and the most able pupils to do really well by the time they leave the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding because it interests the children and helps them to make excellent progress. There are a wealth of extra activities that enrich pupils' education extremely well. Impressive facilities, such as a fully equipped theatre, dance studios, music rooms, a recording studio and a sports hall, provide boundless opportunities for pupils to enjoy themselves and broaden their horizons. Pupils value and enjoy all of these, making comments such as: 'You can learn how to play the trumpet and you don't even have to pay!' Rehearsals for the upcoming production of Aladdin were in full flow and were characterised not only by strong performances and high expectations, but gales of laughter.

The curriculum is designed very well to meet pupils' needs, for example, by providing Saturday morning lessons for older pupils. These provide extra challenges for older pupils with special gifts and talents, and extra support for learning English, mathematics and science skills. A special nurture room provides a haven for pupils who are struggling with difficult issues. Another dedicated room and a team of support staff are especially effective at helping pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to learn basic skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

The outstanding care, guidance and support are a key reason why this is an outstanding school. Every care is taken to meet every pupil's personal and academic needs. Teachers' high expectations are seen in all aspects of school life. Challenging targets are set, and pupils are given clear guidance and help to reach them. Learning and other difficulties and/or disabilities are identified at the earliest opportunity and action taken to address pupils' needs. There are well established systems in place to identify pupils who are not making the expected progress. Staff use this information to find out why, and what they can do to help. The procedures to safeguard the pupils are robust and fully understood by all staff. Partnership with parents is a major strength, and a strong factor in pupils' success. The school is determined to provide pupils with the best of everything, and as a result, most parents and pupils highly value this school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Leadership and management are outstanding. The most impressive feature of the school is the superb accommodation and resources for learning. The school has been able to provide these marvellous resources because the headteacher is extremely successful in obtaining additional funds for the school from a range of sources, such as lottery funding and sponsorship from local and high profile international businesses.

Governance is just as effective. The school regularly makes checks to see how successful it is, and is modest in its own evaluation of its effectiveness. This is because school leaders are ambitious and determined to continually improve the quality of the school. The headteacher is innovative and inspires considerable loyalty from the staff. He is very well supported by the senior staff, who all provide very good leadership. The very strong focus on improving teaching and learning and developing pupils' personal skills are major factors in the school's success. Pupils make really good progress as they move through the school because they are confident and happy, and know what is expected of them. The senior management team and governors see this as their highest priority and, as a result, they are introducing many pupils to a lifelong love of learning and curiosity.

A significant strength is the school's work with parents and the local community. There is a belief that children do best when teachers and parents work together. Parents very much appreciate this, saying 'It is a superb school and I would recommend it to anyone.'

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Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1	NA
The quality and standards in foundation stage	2	NA
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1	NA
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	Yes	NA
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	NA

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1	NA
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2	NA
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1	NA
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1	NA

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	NA
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	NA
The behaviour of learners	1	NA
The attendance of learners	2	NA
How well learners enjoy their education	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	NA
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	NA
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	NA
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1	NA

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1	NA
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	NA
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	NA

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1	NA
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1	NA
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets, through quality assurance and self-review	1	NA
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1	NA
How effectively and efficiently resources are deployed to achieve value for money	1	NA
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1	NA
The adequacy and suitability of staff to ensure that learners are protected	Yes	NA

The extent to which schools enable learners to be healthy	
Learners are encouraged and enabled to eat and drink healthily	Yes
Learners are encouraged and enabled to take regular exercise	Yes
Learners are discouraged from smoking and substance abuse	Yes
Learners are educated about sexual health	Yes
The extent to which providers ensure that learners stay safe	
Procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements	Yes
Risk assessment procedures and related staff training are in place	Yes
Action is taken to reduce anti-social behaviour, such as bullying and racism	Yes
Learners are taught about key risks and how to deal with them	Yes
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution	
Learners are helped to develop stable, positive relationships	Yes
Learners, individually and collectively, participate in making decisions that affect them	Yes
Learners are encouraged to initiate, participate in and manage activities in school and the wider community	Yes
The extent to which schools enable learners to achieve economic well-being	
There is provision to promote learners' basic skills	Yes
Learners have opportunities to develop enterprise skills and work in teams	Yes
Careers education and guidance is provided to all learners in key stage 3 and 4 and the sixth form	NA
Education for all learners aged 14–19 provides an understanding of employment and the economy	NA

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Dear Children

Thank you for helping us when we visited your school this week. All of you were extremely polite and gave us a lot of help. We were especially impressed with the way you behaved. You were very sensible and talked about your school enthusiastically. Lots of you told us that this was a really good school and that the teachers were best at explaining things to you so that you can learn easily. We think that you are right.

Your school is excellent because the headteacher, governors and staff have worked very hard to find extra money so that you can have the best equipment and plenty of extra spaces to work in. The theatre is magnificent and you were thoroughly enjoying your rehearsals for Aladdin. We hope the show goes well.

The best things about your school are:

The teachers

The enjoyable activities that make learning fun in most lessons

The way that you make such good progress in your learning

The confidence that you showed when you were talking to us, and talking to your teachers

We think you need to learn a bit more about the way that different groups of people, from different cultures, live and work together in Great Britain.

Yours sincerely

Liz Kounnou

Lead Inspector