

Woodlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104190
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	286875
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2007
Reporting inspector	Nigel (Nick) Pett

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	428
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Roger Butt
Headteacher	Jane Arnstein
Date of previous school inspection	13 January 2003
School address	Bloxwich Road North Short Heath Willenhall WV12 5PR
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Most pupils in this large primary school are from White British families, and come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. The school roll increased during the last year with an intake of pupils from another school which had been closed. When children enter the Nursery, their skills are below those typically found at the age of three.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, with many improving and already good aspects. Leadership and management are good and are the driving force supporting improvement. Action based on effective planning for improvement is increasing pupils' rate of progress. Pupils' standards are average at the end of Key Stage 2 and achievement is satisfactory.

Children enter the Nursery with skills which are below the expectations for their age. They make good progress throughout the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) and in Key Stage 1. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 2. This is not to say that pupils could not do better and assessment records show that there are inconsistencies in achievement between classes. Whilst progress is satisfactory in English and mathematics in Key Stage 2, it is too slow in science. The good opportunities that pupils are being given in the use of 'thinking boxes', which motivate their interest and extend their understanding, are improving their learning overall. However, not enough problem-solving activities are used, especially in science to accelerate learning.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Many pupils enjoy very good relationships and feel safe in school. Their attendance is average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although there are examples of good and outstanding lessons. In the most effective lessons, pupils achieve well because they respond positively to teachers' often high expectations. However, the work set and the pace of lessons in Key Stage 2 are sometimes not challenging enough for the full range of ability in each class and this slows learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Links between subjects capture pupils' interest and contribute well to the development of basic skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports learning across the curriculum well. Opportunities for science are in need of improvement. Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. Outstanding care is extended to pupils experiencing personal problems, and especially to those who are vulnerable. Parents consider that the school serves their children very well. Most pupils understand how to improve their progress, and they are involved in setting and reviewing their individual targets to help them improve their performance. However, these aspects of academic guidance are not consistently well managed in all classes. Teachers' use of assessment to support planning for pupils' needs is improving.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are good, and governors challenge the school well. The school knows its strengths and what it needs to do to improve. It has good capacity to improve further and is working well to realise its motto of 'Together we strive for excellence'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide more challenging opportunities for investigations and problem-solving activities to accelerate learning, particularly in science.
- Ensure that work set and the pace of lessons in Key Stage 2 are consistently challenging for the full range of ability in each class.
- Ensure that all teachers consistently set and review individual targets with pupils to help them to improve their performance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Achievement is satisfactory overall and standards are broadly average. Children make good progress in the Foundation Stage and most achieve the expected goals by the end of the Reception Year. Progress is good overall for pupils in Key Stage 1 but satisfactory across Key Stage 2. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2006 were broadly average, representing good gains for this year group of pupils in relation to their starting points on entry to Year 1. Results in the national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 fell to just below average in 2006. Pupils underachieved in these tests and targets set by the school were not met. However, the wider evidence from this inspection shows that pupils' progress is sound overall in Key Stage 2 now, particularly in English and mathematics.

Pupils' progress is improving at all stages because of the developing use of assessment to support teachers in their planning and in setting targets for pupils. Teaching is improving although there is still more to be done to drive up achievement and standards more quickly in Key Stage 2, especially in science. Pupils with learning difficulties make satisfactory progress. The better use of data has resulted in the school revisiting its targets for pupils' performance in the national tests and increasing the challenge for 2007.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children make good progress in their personal development in the Foundation Stage, sharing resources well and gaining in confidence. Pupils of all ages really enjoy school and talk confidently about how it is helping them to develop. Their behaviour is good, and they show good attitudes, especially when working with their 'talk partners' to share ideas in class. Pupils' relationships with each other and with staff are good. Pupils know how to be safe and they seek advice from adults confidently. Pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development is good. Most pupils take advantage of the good opportunities to reflect on how they can develop their own values, beliefs and skills, especially in the very good assemblies. The school council operates well and makes sensible suggestions about school life. Older pupils willingly undertake tasks such as helping younger pupils and monitoring behaviour at playtimes. They contribute well to the wider community through charity fund raising and involvement in local projects. During the inspection they were seen eagerly preparing for their fund raising on Red Nose Day. Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles. They are developing good social skills. Pupils' many good personal attributes and effective social skills, together with developing skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT, mean that they are prepared soundly for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 teaching is good and in Key Stage 2 it is satisfactory. There is some inconsistency, however, with some pupils in the same year group learning faster than others, especially in Key Stage 2. In the Foundation Stage teachers give the children purposeful activities and they make good progress as a result.

Pupils in Years 1 to 6 work very hard and respond really well to the challenges their teachers set in the most effective lessons. When teaching is outstanding, pupils are given exciting activities which involve them very well in giving their ideas and having to think about what they are doing. In many lessons, teachers make good use of resources and their skills in using interactive whiteboards stimulate pupils' interest and learning. They set work which matches pupils' learning well and this leads to lessons with a good pace and enjoyable learning activities. Pupils' learning is good when their work is well marked and they understand their targets well. In lessons in which teaching is satisfactory, the work set is too much the same for all pupils in the class regardless of their differing abilities. When this is the case, the pace of learning slows, especially amongst the more capable pupils. There are also times when the pace of the lesson is not challenging enough for all. Marking is not clear enough in the classes where teaching is satisfactory and pupils do not take enough care with their work. Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution in lessons across the school and with specialist groups. They make sure that pupils understand the work and challenge them to do well.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The range of learning opportunities in the Foundation Stage is good. In the Nursery, for example, the 'Curiosity Corner' helps to extend children's knowledge and understanding of the world well. The outside play area has been improved since the last inspection but there is still no covered area where children can work when the weather is poor. As a result, opportunities for outdoor learning are sometimes restricted.

Good opportunities for literacy are successfully improving pupils' basic skills in writing and reading. The development of learning units, when subjects are grouped together, is enthusing older pupils' learning. For example, work on the topic of blizzards not only promotes learning in science and geography but also uses and develops skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. There are good opportunities for a special emphasis on particular subjects, such as an arts week. However, limited resources give pupils too few opportunities for investigations and problem-solving in science. These opportunities are better in mathematics although development of them is necessary to accelerate learning in this subject. Across all age ranges, the wide range of visitors and visits, with a good range of extra-curricular clubs, adds to learning opportunities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Pastoral care is very good and some outstanding support is provided for pupils who are experiencing personal problems. Pupils know that the learning mentor and teaching assistants are readily available in the 'Tree House' room in which they are based, and their use of this support is well managed. The support for pupils with learning difficulties is satisfactory but improving quickly. The links with external agencies to support pupils are very good, and good systems are effectively used to address attendance issues. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are good. Behaviour codes are well implemented, helping pupils in their personal development. Pupils' academic guidance is often good although there are some inconsistencies. Most pupils have clear targets which they understand, helping them to improve their work and raise their standards. However, these targets are occasionally not reviewed well enough and marking does not always support pupils by showing them how they can achieve the targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The school's evaluation of itself is accurate. The headteacher gives the school good direction. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The pace has quickened with the development of assessment under the direction of the recently appointed able deputy headteacher and the oversight of special educational needs by the headteacher. Their monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are good and effective training is improving teaching so that pupils are learning quicker. This is driving up standards and achievement well. This monitoring is being extended to involve other leaders more and the staff are working well as a team to take the school forward. There is still some inconsistency in the effectiveness of subject leaders which the school is working to address. The Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There is very good leadership of the experienced, well-qualified teaching assistants. Governance is good. Governors have improved the way that they work as 'critical friends'. Their questioning yet supportive approach has helped the school to move on. The school improvement plan is well set out and contributes effectively to school improvement. In the light of the recent accelerated rate of improvement, the capacity to improve the school is good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	School Overall
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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?	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

- Thank you for the very courteous way that you welcomed us when we came to inspect your school. Year 6 certainly carried out their roles very well in guiding us around the school. We enjoyed the many opportunities to talk with you and your teachers, and to watch some of your lessons. We found that your school is a satisfactory school. It has many good points and is improving your education well. What we most liked about your school
- Your progress in your work is satisfactory and improving. Younger pupils are getting off to a good start.
- You really enjoy school, feel safe there, and usually behave well.
- You treat your teachers and the teaching assistants with respect.
- Your teachers and other adults care for you well, particularly when you have problems.
- You enjoy using your class 'thinking boxes' and the clubs and visits that take place.
- Your headteacher and governors are working very well with the staff to make your school a good school. What we have asked your school to do now
- Give you more opportunities in investigations and problem-solving to improve your learning, particularly in science.
- Make sure that the work you are given is always at the right level of difficulty for you and that your learning always moves on at a good pace in lessons.
- Ensure all your teachers set you targets and discuss your progress with you so that you know how you can do better.

We hope that you will all continue to do your best and help to make Woodlands an even better school.