

Woodlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104990
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	287084
Inspection dates	28–29 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Derek Aitken

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	312
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A McNeill
Headteacher	Mrs Gillian Lindfield
Date of previous school inspection	17 June 2002
School address	Hollybank Road Birkenhead Merseyside CH41 2SY
Telephone number	0151 6478406
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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

This large, popular school is situated in the centre of town. Pupils come from a variety of backgrounds but the area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social disadvantage. This is reflected in the very high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The majority of pupils are White British but there is a significant minority of pupils of Bengali heritage. Eleven pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. More pupils than is usual join or leave the school between Year 1 and the end of Year 6. The school achieved the North West Inclusion Award in 2005 and Activemark in 2006.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

School leaders evaluate the performance of the school to be good and state that staff 'go the extra mile' to meet the needs of each individual pupil. Inspectors agree with them on both counts. They commend especially the high quality of pastoral care provided for the pupils, which is fully evident in pupils' personal development and outstanding behaviour. Inspectors also endorse the views of the vast majority of parents, who are very satisfied with the work of the school. The comment that 'the school has made exceptional efforts to support my child when he had to move schools' is typical of the way parents and carers view the helpfulness of the staff.

Pupils' achievement is good. Children get off to a successful start in the Foundation Stage. Here they are provided with attractive, well balanced opportunities for learning, and every effort is made to combat weaknesses in literacy and numeracy. Staff assess children's progress carefully, and work closely with parents to support their children and help them move on. Standards are below average when pupils enter Year 1. They make good progress thereafter to reach broadly average standards by the end of Year 6. Support programmes are now being targeted more effectively, and this is reflected in improved standards for some individuals. Provision for larger groups of pupils, for example those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and non-native learners of English, is well organised and effective.

Pupils enjoy many aspects of school life. Their exemplary behaviour is shown in the high levels of respect they have for each other, including those of different cultures. They say things like 'We all mix together well, otherwise we wouldn't get on so well with each other.' Pupils make very good use of the opportunities provided to develop a strong sense of responsibility, both to themselves and to others. They are well aware of how to stay safe, and the curriculum makes a good contribution to their understanding of the importance of being fit and healthy. Opportunities for gifted and talented pupils are more limited. Consistently good teaching (with some elements of outstanding practice) underpins the good progress pupils make. Teachers ensure that pupils understand how to go about their work, and adapt their approach successfully to meet individual requirements. Work is particularly well matched to the needs of lower-attaining and average-attaining pupils. While pupils are regularly engaged in oral assessment and reflect on their work in lessons, teachers' marking does not offer consistent guidance to enable them to improve further. Pupils are supported and guided well in pastoral matters. Tracking systems have improved but are not yet fully effective in raising standards for all pupils.

The school has improved well since its last inspection and provides good value for money. The overall trend in standards has been upwards, despite a downturn last year. The harmonious atmosphere is a tribute to the staff and to the tireless efforts of the headteacher to ensure that ethnic diversity is celebrated and fully reflected in the work of the school. Links with other agencies and the use of resources to support the well-being of pupils are particularly effective. School self-evaluation is honest and extensive, but new curricular initiatives and actions taken to tackle weaknesses are not yet evaluated precisely enough, especially at middle management level, in relation to standards.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that the effectiveness of new curricular initiatives and actions taken by school leaders are sharply evaluated to have a clear impact on raising standards.

- Make better use of marking and individual targets to help pupils improve their work.
- Provide better opportunities to stretch gifted and talented pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children enter school with well below average skills. In the Foundation Stage, they make good progress in all areas of their learning. However, when they begin Year 1, standards in all areas are still below those expected for their age. Thereafter pupils make good progress to reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Achievement is good because teachers match work closely to pupils' needs. In 2006 there was a dip in the results gained by both the Year 2 and mixed Years 5 and 6 classes. In both cases these were related to the specific nature of the year groups, and pupils currently in Year 6 have managed to catch up lost ground. The school monitors closely the achievement of different groups, ensuring that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve at the same rate as the others. Systems for tracking the progress of pupils have improved in the last year and these are used well to identify individual pupils lagging behind for additional support. Over time, there is no significant difference between the performance of boys and of girls.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Personal development and well-being are good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with aspects of excellence in the moral element. Pupils behave very well and show great respect both for each other and for adults. They mix well together both at work and at play. Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects and participate well in extra-curricular activities, especially sport. They benefit from free fruit and toast but not all choose to eat healthily in the canteen. Pupils are very well aware of how to stay safe and demonstrate this by the considerate way they conduct themselves to reduce congestion in classrooms and corridors. Attendance is showing steady improvement in response to hard work from the school, and is now average. Pupils have a strong sense of belonging to and pride in their school as a result of the varied opportunities to contribute to school life, for example through the school council or as play counsellors. Steady progress in acquiring basic skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), sets pupils up well for the future.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of how pupils learn. This is reflected in interesting lessons which stimulate pupils' imagination, hold their attention and facilitate their good progress. Relationships are excellent and pupils quickly acquire the confidence both to ask questions when they are unsure and to respond to their teachers. Group work is well matched to pupils' needs. In the best lessons probing questions develop pupils' thinking skills effectively. Assessment is used expertly to involve all learners in the lesson, to build up their knowledge and skills systematically and to enable them to reflect on their learning. On rare occasions when learning is less precisely directed, the pace of learning drops. Pupils make good use of opportunities to work with others, and consequently there is

usually a lively buzz to learning. Teaching assistants are deployed very effectively to ensure that no pupil falls behind. The quality of marking and the use of individual targets do not provide the consistent boost pupils need to enable them to take the next steps in their learning.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The broad and balanced curriculum meets the needs of pupils well. Particular strengths are the well organised provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for pupils with English as an additional language. In both cases careful early assessment underpins effective support programmes. Arrangements to support gifted and talented pupils are less well developed. The Foundation Stage curriculum is good, because it is well planned to develop all areas of children's learning. Recent initiatives, such as 'Mind Friendly Learning', have enhanced pupils' enjoyment of lessons. Increasing use is being made of ICT to support learning better. Other actions have been taken recently to boost performance in English, mathematics and science. These have not yet had a significant impact on standards. Pupils' personal development benefits from a good range of visits and visitors. Extra-curricular activities, for example sport and drama, are supported well and enhance pupils' enjoyment of school. The school demonstrates its commitment to inclusion by organising weekend activities to ensure equal opportunities for pupils who attend mosque school on weekday evenings.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding the health, safety and welfare of pupils, including child protection, are in place. The school has good strategies to support vulnerable pupils through close partnership with other agencies and through its own resources, for example the nurture group. There is a good range of opportunities for pupils to feel valued and have their achievements recognised. For example, celebration assemblies build their confidence and self-esteem. The staff know the pupils and their families very well. Consequently, pupils feel well cared for and secure in school. Staff are excellent role models and this is reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes and conduct. The school makes determined efforts to involve parents and is now laying the foundations of wider partnerships with them. Support programmes to improve the skills of targeted groups of pupils have been broadly effective, due to improved tracking procedures. These procedures have yet to impact on the achievement of all pupils, as individual targets are not consistently exploited in written assessment.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The good leadership is securely focused on improving quality in all aspects of the school's work. Monitoring draws on a wide range of evidence and is effective overall. As a result, leaders have an accurate understanding of strengths and areas for further development. Leadership roles have been thoughtfully reallocated recently to reinforce teamwork, promote curriculum development and ensure greater accountability for standards at middle leadership level. While much has been accomplished, monitoring by middle managers has yet to be developed fully, for example to enable staff to assess precisely pupils' achievements in the foundation subjects. Teachers and teaching assistants are reflective practitioners and incorporate new techniques into their work successfully. The school development plan is comprehensive and linked well to

priorities, but success criteria are not sharp enough to gauge accurately the impact of actions on standards. Governors are closely involved with the work of the school and provide a good measure of support and challenge.

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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?	2
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?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

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	1
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
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**

We visited your school recently to find out how well you are learning. Thank you for making us welcome and being helpful when we talked to you.

We judge that your school gives you a good education. You have good opportunities to develop your skills and talents. The headteacher works exceptionally hard to ensure that all pupils feel included and welcome in school. We fully agree with you that her staff look after you very well. They know each of you as individuals and take a keen interest in your progress, even when you've moved up into a different class. You play your part too! We were all impressed by how well you get on with each other. Your behaviour is outstanding, not least the way you show respect for each other and adults too. This helps you to feel safe, enjoy school and develop well both personally and socially. Your teachers ensure that you learn well and make good progress. They set you a very good example, by not settling for second best, but always looking for new ways to make your learning interesting.

There are three things that we have asked the headteacher and staff to do to make your learning better. First, we want them to check carefully that the things they do to try to raise your standards, especially in English, mathematics and science, do in fact work. We saw how well teachers' comments in class help you learn. Our second request is for teachers to make better use of marking and individual targets to help you improve your work. Finally, we have asked the headteacher to provide more opportunities to stretch those of you who are gifted and talented.

We know you will continue to work hard to make sure you make the best use of the many good things school has to offer. Just one thing, however. While you enjoy sport and eat healthily at breaktimes, you did not always follow the good advice you gave to me on healthy eating at lunchtimes!

Best wishes for the future.