

Woodchurch CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105067
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	287110
Inspection dates	6–7 June 2007
Reporting inspector	Graham Martin

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Alison Cretney
Headteacher	Mr Brian McGregor
Date of previous school inspection	10 March 2003
School address	Church Lane Woodchurch Wirral Merseyside CH49 7LS
Telephone number	0151 6774788
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is an average sized school, which has strong links with the local church and largely serves the surrounding housing estate. Some pupils travel from further afield to this popular, oversubscribed school. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is twice the national average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than average, as is the number of pupils with a statement of special educational need. The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. A small minority of pupils are from minority ethnic groups, a very small proportion of them speaking English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is below that expected nationally. The headteacher has been in post since January 2006 and the deputy headteacher since only January 2007. The school holds the ArtsMark and ActiveMark gold awards and has the Healthy Schools bronze award for being a health-promoting school.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The inspectors agree with the school's own judgement that it is a good school. A new leadership team has made a good start to improving the school's work. Pupils achieve well and standards are broadly average by the end of Year 6. When they enter the Reception class, the children's skills are generally below those expected for their age. Good provision in the Foundation Stage means that the children achieve well. Most of them reach the expected goals by the time they enter Year 1. In Years 1 to 6 teaching and learning are good overall and pupils continue to achieve well, so that by the end of Years 2 and 6 they reach standards similar to the national averages in reading, writing, aspects of mathematics and science. The skills of problem solving in mathematics are, however, lower than average, leading to overall standards in mathematics lower than in other subjects. Pupils' progress in learning how to apply mathematical knowledge to solve problems is inconsistent because learning targets, especially for more able pupils, are not challenging enough. Where targets are well defined, such as in Year 6, expectations are higher and pupils make better progress.

The school has a good curriculum which meets pupils' interests well. Recent work, based around themes, makes the curriculum more accessible and 'friendly' to pupils. Pupils say that they enjoy learning this way because lessons are more interesting. Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. There are very evident strengths in pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which add great value to their personal development. Pupils behave well and enjoy school. They are exceptionally courteous and polite. The care of pupils is good overall, with exceptional pastoral care being a reflection of the school's very good atmosphere. Parents say they are pleased with the high quality of care shown for their children. Teaching and learning overall are good. However, academic guidance for pupils, such as in teachers' comments and marking, does not always sufficiently inform them how to improve.

Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, in the early days of establishing a new approach to leading the school, show good qualities of leadership in their vision and aspirations. However, although the skills of middle leaders are developing well, they do not yet have a detailed enough knowledge of pupils' achievement. Good systems have been set in place to improve team leadership and the responsibility of governors to hold the school to account. Together with strong local and community partnerships, this all gives the school good capacity to improve. Resources are managed and used well and, overall, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve use and application of pupils' number skills in practical and problem-solving situations to raise the standards of the more able pupils in mathematics.
- Improve the quality and reliability of marking, feedback to pupils and target setting to ensure that progress is consistently good in all classes.
- Increase accountability of middle leaders for checking that pupils' achievement is improving.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

On entry to the Foundation Stage there is a wide range of attainment but, overall, children's skills on entry are below those expected for their age. In the Reception class, good emphasis on the key skills of speaking, listening, reading, writing and number enables the children to

progress well enough for many of them, though not all, to reach the early goals for their learning. Those learning English as an additional language make similar progress to others. This represents good achievement. This good progress continues in Years 1 to 6 so that, by the end of Year 6, pupils generally reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are close to the average found nationally. However, standards in mathematics are lower than in the other subjects. This is because pupils, particularly the more able, are not consistently achieving as well as they should in applying their knowledge to solving problems. Where challenges are good, such as in Year 6, pupils' capabilities are reflected in the better rate of progress. Individual differences between year groups result in some fluctuation in standards from year to year, but pupils' good achievement is generally sustained. The progress of pupils currently in Year 6, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, shows that they are on course to achieve the realistic targets set for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. They are exceptionally polite and friendly with each other and very confident and courteous when talking to adults. They have positive attitudes to learning and good relationships with their teachers. Pupils say they enjoy coming to school, and this is reflected in the school's improving attendance figures, presently a little above the national average. Pupils have a clear sense of moral and social responsibility, and this enables them to contribute well to the life of the school. For example, very good work by the Year 6 play leaders helps younger children to learn to play fairly at breaktimes, adding value to the quality of relationships between pupils throughout the school. Pupils contribute well to the well-being of their wider community through fundraising for charities.

Representatives of the school council reported how much they enjoy helping the school. They are proud of the success of their work, for instance to improve school meals and to persuade adults to invest in a cycle shelter. Pupils' spiritual, social and moral development has very evident strengths, provided through thought-provoking assemblies and a well structured personal, social and health education programme. Pupils know the importance of leading healthy lifestyles and are aware of the benefits of exercise and good nutrition, as evidenced in the school's bronze award for being a health-promoting school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is consistently good, adding a high level of value to the children's learning. In Years 1 to 6, teaching is mainly good but, where it is satisfactory, expectations are not as high as they could be because assessment is not used well enough to set challenging learning targets. This is especially the case for more able pupils in mathematics. While the teaching and learning of number skills is good, the use of these skills for solving problems is weaker, leading to inconsistent progress in pupils' ability to use their mathematical knowledge and understanding in practical situations. Teachers' comments and the quality of marking are not always sufficient to help pupils improve. Progress is more rapid where marking and feedback to pupils are used well, such as in Year 6. This is because consistently good academic guidance raises the levels of challenge and expectation. Pupils then catch up to some extent, but not enough to enable them to achieve standards as good, for instance, as those in reading and writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum exceeds current requirements with Spanish being taught throughout the school. Pupils say they enjoy this and other opportunities to make their learning interesting. The school taps into valuable local and community partnerships to add variety to the curriculum and to meet pupils' individual interests. These include a sports partnership with the local high school to enable high school staff to teach physical education skills to pupils in Years 5 and 6, and gardening for Year 2 pupils, who work with a horticulturalist to grow vegetables in soil beds that they have helped to build and prepare. There are examples of good quality artwork on display. The school has made a good start on developing a curriculum based on learning themes; feedback from pupils is very positive. 'This is much better than having a book for each subject and I learn more,' explained a Year 5 pupil after a lesson on night and day which developed skills and knowledge in literacy, numeracy and science.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Exceptionally good pastoral care is a noticeable strength of the school. Pupils feel safe and very well supported. They say that they know who to turn to for help if they are anxious or worried. When discussing a recent anti-bullying week, one Year 3 pupil said, 'There are no bullies at our school.' The school's very caring atmosphere is much appreciated by parents. They have faith and trust in the staff, knowing that their children are very well cared for, with someone pupils can seek out for advice and support if they are worried or anxious. The required arrangements for safeguarding pupils are in place. Improved pupil tracking arrangements help to identify pupils who need extra support in order to do their best. At present, however, academic guidance for pupils is inconsistent. The use of marking and the process of setting targets to help pupils to understand what they need to do to improve varies between classes. Very strong links with the local high school for sport and academic development aid pupils' transition to their next school. Year 6 pupils say that they feel well prepared for this move.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher and the recently appointed but experienced deputy headteacher is good. Their skills and expertise complement each other well. The appointment of a deputy headteacher has restored the leadership team to full strength. Particular impact is seen in the school's priorities for moving forward with introducing learning based on themed lessons, which pupils enjoy, and assessment for learning to set more challenging targets. Much evidence of supportive teamwork shows that staff morale is very good. The headteacher has implemented a number of key improvements. The clear vision for the school's improvement is shared effectively with all relevant groups. The headteacher has defined leadership roles clearly and shared them among staff. Key leaders are, therefore, empowered to steer improvements, but this work is at an early stage of development. While middle leaders have begun to make an impact by leading the development of their subjects, they do not yet monitor pupils' progress and standards in sufficient detail. Good use is made, however, of data on pupils' progress to identify areas for improvement. The detailed, three-year school improvement plan identifies the correct priorities for development. The headteacher

and governors are responsive the views of parents' and pupils'. For example, the school's format for reporting to parents has been improved as a result of parental feedback. Governors are very supportive. They know the school well and play their part in helping to shape its direction, but are not critical enough in holding the school to account for its performance. The school gives good value for money because the budget is managed carefully to assist in raising standards and improving provision in a purposeful learning environment.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	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	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?	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	3
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**

First of all, thank you very much for the welcome that you gave Mrs Flitcroft and me when we visited Woodchurch Church of England Primary School. You were very friendly and helpful. We were very impressed with how polite and well behaved you all are. We enjoyed our visit and it didn't take us long to realise that you enjoy learning very much. Thank you for all the discussions we had that helped us to find out how well your school works. You told me that you think you have a good school. I am sure that you will be pleased to know that we agree with you!

These are the things that we were most impressed by.

- Your good behaviour and your friendship and care towards each other.
- Your interest in the school's activities and your eagerness to learn. This means that you learn well and are keen to try your best to reach the standards expected of you - well done!
- The good care that your school gives you. You told us that you appreciate how well your school cares for you, especially when you have any worries, upsets or concerns.

There are just three things that we would like your school to do better.

- To improve your mathematical skills to help you to solve problems.
- Your teachers could improve the ways they mark your work and tell you what you need to do to improve it.
- How your teachers check that you are doing your best in all subjects could be improved.

Mrs Flitcroft and I would like to send you our best wishes for the future. We hope that you all carry on trying your best and enjoying learning.