



Wheatfields Infant and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 117268
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290776
Inspection dates 6–7 February 2007
Reporting inspector Philip Mann HMI

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

Type of school	Infant	School address	Downes Road
School category	Community		St. Albans
Age range of pupils	3–7		Hertfordshire AL4 9NT
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01727 859978
Number on roll (school)	338	Fax number	01727 832807
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Vicky Dumday
		Headteacher	Mrs Carolyn Booth
Date of previous school inspection	2 July 2002		

Age group	Inspection dates	Inspection number
3–7	6–7 February 2007	290776

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wheatfield Infant and Nursery School is above average in size for its type. The school is located in a mixed residential area of St Albans. The children's starting points in the nursery are average overall. The number of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. A below average number of pupils have learning difficulties. The majority of pupils are White British in origin. An average number of pupils are learning English as an additional language with a small number at the early stages of language acquisition in English. The school has gained several awards and accreditations in recognition of its work such as Healthy School's Award, Investors in People, ICT Mark, Active Mark and Arts Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good and effective school. It has some outstanding features with a couple of areas that are satisfactory. These judgements generally match those of the school's own evaluation. Leadership and management are good and a very positive climate for learning has been established consistent with the school's vision 'Where happiness brings success.' All pupils are valued as individuals in this very inclusive school and the vast majority of parents believe this to be the case. One parent commented that, 'Children are really encouraged to try new things and express themselves freely.'

Pupils' personal development is good. All pupils display very positive attitudes to learning and attendance at school is very effective. Pupils respond well to the good levels of support provided. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from outstanding to satisfactory and is good overall. Teachers demonstrate good levels of expertise and relationships between adults and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are very positive. As a result, all pupils achieve well and many attain well above average standards in literacy and numeracy by the time they move onto the junior school.

The curriculum is good overall. The school provides an effective range of work which is adapted well to cater for the needs of all. Provision is outstanding for children in the Foundation Stage and so their personal development is excellent. These children are encouraged extremely effectively to become fully independent and to help organise their learning. This is continued in Key Stage 1. For example, pupils in Year 2 are encouraged to become playground equipment monitors, organise the distribution of the equipment, ensure the playground is litter free and report any damaged equipment to a member of staff.

Pupils are well cared for and many parents appreciate this good level of support. Inspectors judge that staff manage the behaviour of pupils well. However, some parents are unsure about how the school deals with behaviour issues when they sometimes arise. Procedures for the safeguarding of pupils meet statutory requirements. Assessment systems in the Foundation Stage are outstanding. Systems for tracking the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 are satisfactory and assessment information is used well to identify areas for improvement. However, this is not yet a consistent feature in all year groups. This is especially so in the monitoring and assessment of writing in Key Stage 1 where not all pupils are given effective guidance on how to improve.

Governance of the school is outstanding. Governors very effectively support the work of the school and play a vital role in monitoring its work. Good partnerships have been established with adjacent schools and other support groups. The school has made good improvement since the previous inspection and demonstrates good capacity for further development. Taking all factors into account, the school provides good value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure assessment is used consistently well in writing at Key Stage 1 so all pupils know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Work with parents to resolve their concerns about how pupils' behaviour is managed.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good across the school. Children enter the Nursery class with communication, language and literacy skills that are generally above the levels expected nationally but overall attainment across all area of learning is what would normally be expected. Teaching is of very high quality and outstanding provision for children in the Foundation Stage ensures that the attainment of these children is above average by the time they start in Year 1. Overall, this good progress is maintained throughout Key Stage 1 and pupils attain well above average standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2. This is confirmed by the 2006 teacher assessments. A continuing trend of very high standards has been maintained for several years with small variations evident due to fluctuations in the overall attainment of each year group. Data analysis indicates that that there are no significant issues related to the achievement of different groups of pupils.

Pupils with learning difficulties make good and sometimes very good progress because work is very carefully planned for them. Well trained and dedicated support staff make a valuable contribution to the achievement of these pupils in class. Those pupils whose home language is not English make equally good progress because of carefully planned work programmes which ensure effective levels of support are provided.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Attendance is very good and pupils really enjoy coming to school. They say, 'Teachers are good at lessons and children behave nicely.' Behaviour is good overall. However, a handful of parents and their children expressed concerns over the behaviour of a few pupils and the way the school handled their concerns about bullying. There was no evidence of this during the inspection when all pupils behaved well. Pupils know about healthy foods and the need for a balanced diet and usually make healthy choices about what to eat. Their good social skills and growing self confidence, coupled with good levels of literacy and numeracy ensure they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of schooling. Pupils on the school council take their responsibilities seriously and help to organise projects like fund raising for people in need. Pupils say they know who to turn to in school with their worries or concerns.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. One parent said, 'My daughter really enjoys school, she is making good progress and is well cared for and looked after by all the staff.' This is typical of the very good relationships which exist between the adults and the children and helps them to learn well. Some of the teaching is outstanding. In one lesson in the Foundation Stage the pupils thoroughly enjoyed using programmable robots, solving number puzzles, and playing games to extend their learning about addition. This practical and fun approach to learning helped them make rapid progress. In a minority of lessons where progress was satisfactory some pupils were not challenged well enough and they began to lose interest in their work. Teaching assistants support the pupils very well by taking small groups and helping individual children when they have difficulties with their work. The quality of teachers' marking at Key Stage 1 is not always careful enough to ensure that all pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is rich and vibrant. It provides good opportunities for learning and helps pupils to become confident, caring and respectful individuals. Work is generally well matched to the pupils' different starting points and this is reflected in the high standards they reach. The provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good. They receive an effective level of support which is based on a thorough knowledge of their individual needs. One parent said, 'The school has been very supportive and very inclusive. I feel that parents and school work together successfully.'

Visits, visitors and a wide range of extra-curricular activities, including languages, arts and sports enrich the curriculum. After-school and lunchtime clubs are over subscribed and are thoroughly enjoyed by the pupils.

The provision for pupils in the Foundation Stage is outstanding. The Foundation Stage curriculum effectively meets the needs of the youngest children, developing independence and very good skills in all areas of learning.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. The vast majority of parents think very highly of the school and the way it cares for their children. One wrote, 'The caring approach encouraged by the school makes it a warm and friendly environment for children and parents alike.' All the required procedures to ensure pupils' safety and well-being are in place. The school has close links with the junior and secondary schools on the same site, providing a smooth transition between schools. Procedures for monitoring the

progress and personal development of pupils are satisfactory overall with some examples of very good practice found in the Foundation Stage. The records kept for pupils with learning difficulties are very accurate and ensure support is carefully targeted and work fully meets the needs of these pupils. However, there are some inconsistencies between Key Stage 1 classes in the quality of assessment records for other pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall with significant strengths in school governance. The headteacher provides clear strong leadership for the school's work and day to day management is very good. The deputy headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management for the Foundation Stage team. Teamwork is encouraged throughout the school and subject coordinators play an important part in curriculum development.

Planning for school improvement is good overall. The annual plan is detailed with clearly identified items for action closely linked to the school budget. Plans are in place to involve the wider school community in its future strategic planning. Procedures for self-evaluation are very comprehensive and, when used well by subject leaders to influence current practice, they result in improvements in pupil standards; for example, in information and communication technology. When their use is less secure, as seen in the development of pupils' writing, the impact is more limited.

Governors provide outstanding levels of support and expertise for the school. They are not afraid to ask challenging questions of management and utilise a wide range of monitoring techniques to gain a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas of development.

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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	1
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	1
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	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
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	1

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.

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	1
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	1
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

9 February 2007

Dear Pupils

Wheatfield Infant and Nursery School, Downes Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL4 9NT

The inspectors and I really enjoyed visiting your school and would like to thank you all for making us feel so welcome and showing us what you do. It was good to see that you all love taking part in all the good things that the staff plan well for you. You are keen to talk about your experiences with others and clearly all enjoy being at school. This is because the teachers and all staff work hard and effectively as a team to make lessons fun. It is such a pleasure to see you all working hard in the classrooms and playing happily together in the playgrounds. Children get off to a flying start in the Foundation Stage and make extremely good progress. Children's behaviour in the Foundation Stage is excellent. This is mostly because teaching is outstanding. Pupils' behaviour in Years 1 and 2 is good. Some of you tell us that sometimes the behaviour of just a few pupils in Years 1 and 2 worries you. Inspectors feel that the staff try very hard to prevent this but they are going to make every effort to provide even more support for your classmates who find it difficult to always behave well. In that way everyone will be able to succeed within a school 'where happiness brings success.' You can all play an important part in this by doing what the staff ask you to do and helping classmates who sometimes find it difficult to behave well.

All of you are making good progress in your work and this is especially so in your reading. Your headteacher always encourages everyone to work hard and manages the school in a really good way. She is supported by a very good team of governors and together they are going to make sure that you are provided with good information to help you improve your work even more. The teachers are going to make sure that your writing is marked in a similar way in all classes.

Wishing you all the very best for the future.

Philip Mann

Her Majesty's Inspector