



Woodcote Primary School

Inspection Report

Unique Reference Number 123040
Local Authority Oxfordshire
Inspection number 292566
Inspection dates 9–10 October 2006
Reporting inspector Nicola Davies

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Reading Road
School category	Community		Woodcote
Age range of pupils	4–11		Reading RG8 0QY
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01491 680454
Number on roll (school)	141	Fax number	01491 680674
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Abi Holland
		Headteacher	Mrs L Knapp
Date of previous school inspection	23 September 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This is a small village primary school between Reading and Oxford. Most of its pupils live within the relatively advantaged village of Woodcote. More than a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties which is higher than the rate found nationally. Most pupils are of White British heritage.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodcote Primary provides a satisfactory quality of education which enables children of all ages and abilities to make sound progress. A strength of the school is its concern for each individual and for the school as a community, which ensures that pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils are polite, well behaved and show a real concern for each other and for their school. A further strength is the curriculum which offers pupils in this small school very varied opportunities. For example, pupils learn French, go on residential visits and day trips, enjoy a wide range of sporting and cultural activities, learn about 'values' as well as developing appropriate basic skills. As parents recognise, these strengths mean that pupils are 'happy and fulfilled' during their time at the school.

Until recently, the standards reached by pupils were below average. However, this has improved significantly and, overall, standards are now average. This is reflected in the most recent results of the national tests and, taking account of pupils' starting points, this represents a satisfactory level of achievement. This improvement has come about through the energetic and enthusiastic leadership of the headteacher who has maintained a clear focus on improving the progress that pupils make. For example, a successful focus on speaking and listening and problem solving has improved the progress which pupils make in writing and mathematics. The school is rigorous in setting targets and pupils, parents, teachers and governors are involved well in monitoring pupils' progress towards these. This has helped the school identify its strengths and weaknesses accurately. For example, plans are underway to improve the satisfactory Foundation Stage by providing better opportunities for the youngest children to learn outdoors. Teaching is satisfactory and results in pupils making sound progress in learning as they move through the Foundation Stage and Years 1 to 6. However, more remains to be done to ensure that successful methods or approaches are adopted consistently by all teachers. For example, teachers of younger pupils do not take a consistent approach to the teaching of sounds and letters, which results in some pupils making slower progress in their early reading and writing. Similarly, not all of the regular observations of lessons focus sharply enough on the progress that pupils make during each session. However, the track record of improvements to date means that the school leaders have the capacity to secure further improvement. Parents are rightly confident that their children's good personal and social development and enjoyment of school are beginning to be reflected in consistently 'stronger academic results'.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure a consistent approach to the teaching and recording of early reading and writing skills in Reception and KS1
- Improve progress in mathematics and English by ensuring that the monitoring of teaching is sharply focused on the quality of learning in lessons
- Improve the outdoor curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Most children enter the Foundation stage with broadly appropriate skills and knowledge for their age, although a significant minority have less well developed language skills. They quickly respond to the calm and ordered environment and make sound progress so that most reach the goals set for the end of the Reception year, although not those in language and literacy.

Across the school, standards have, historically, been below those found in schools nationally. Improvements to behaviour and a sharp focus on setting and sharing challenging targets have made a significant difference. As a result, the most recent results in national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6 show a marked improvement. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are now average and the progress which pupils make overall is satisfactory and good for the oldest pupils. There are no significant differences between how well girls and boys achieve.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils show a good understanding of the values which are important to the school and, as a result, they are polite, well behaved and show consideration for others. This thoughtful ethos means that pupils feel safe, are confident and enjoy their time with others. Their good behaviour is enhanced by the well trained peer mediators who help sort out any difficulties which arise between pupils during lunches and breaks. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Pupils enjoy school a good deal. They are successfully encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and particularly welcome the varied opportunities they have for physical exercise through lunchtime and after school clubs and physical activities such as 'craze of the day'. Girls and boys show a good awareness of safety issues and all agree on the importance of making and keeping rules which help keep them and others safe. Pupils make a good contribution to the life of the school through, for example, running the school office at lunchtime or spending some of the school council's small budget on air fresheners for the pupils' toilets. The school plans to give pupils further opportunities to get involved in the wider community. Whilst pupils' academic progress is satisfactory, the good quality of their personal and social development prepares them well for their secondary school and their future beyond school.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teachers have very good relationships with pupils which ensure pupils' good attitudes to learning. This means that pupils behave well in lessons, even if the pace of learning slows as, for example, when teachers take too long explaining tasks. A clear success is how well teachers explain to pupils what they are going to learn and how well pupils assess whether they have really understood the lesson and reached their 'learning objective'. Pupils recognise this and say that teachers 'make good points' which help them learn. Teachers use resources, including the interactive whiteboards, well to add interest to their lessons. For example, younger children are entranced by puppets and older pupils enjoy learning about Egyptian farming through growing their own wheat and barley.

The school has good systems to assess and record pupils' achievements. All teachers modify their plans to match activities to the needs of particular groups of pupils in their mixed age classes, which is largely successful. A weaker aspect of teaching is the lack of consistency in the way that sounds and letters are introduced which slows the progress of some younger pupils in early reading and writing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good curriculum designed to meet the range of pupils' personal, social and academic needs. There is a very effective personal and social education programme, based on common values, which helps develop pupils' understanding of concepts such as responsibility. This contributes to their self confidence and concern for others. Good use is made of teachers' particular skills so that pupils benefit from specialist teaching in some subjects, such as physical education, music and mathematics. The curriculum includes opportunities for all pupils in Year 3–6 to learn French. Pupils use their English, mathematics and ICT skills well in other subjects which help them develop their learning. The school has rightly recognised that younger pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to explore the outdoor curriculum and plans are underway to enhance this.

The curriculum is enriched by a good range of visitors to the school and visits, including a residential trip for the oldest pupils. Although Woodcote is a small school, good links with other local schools and organisations means pupils benefit from a wide range of additional, enjoyable activities such as lunchtime and after school clubs.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils are well cared for and this contributes well to their personal and academic progress. Procedures to protect children

are robust and the school makes sensible arrangements to assess and deal with potential risks. Careful tracking of pupils' progress helps teachers to identify any potential problems and extra support is promptly provided, either through help in class or through additional programmes taught in small groups. Not all additional programmes for pupils who find aspects of English and mathematics more difficult have been equally effective. The school has recognised this and makes careful adaptations to which programmes are used and how they are implemented.

Pupils are well involved in assessing their own progress and this effectively helps them to understand how to make improvements to their work. For example, pupils with learning difficulties are routinely involved in commenting on how well they have met targets in their individual education plans. Similarly, all pupils are used to judging for themselves how well they feel they have achieved in their lessons and how they can improve their work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The head teacher and staff share a commitment to ensuring that pupils grow as individuals during their time at the school and, as a result, provide them with good opportunities to learn about what they think, feel and can do. Alongside this, effective steps have been taken to improve aspects of teaching and learning which are helping pupils to make better progress in their basic skills and achieve better standards as a result. These include developing consistent opportunities for speaking and listening, problem solving in mathematics and involving pupils well in assessing their own progress. Senior staff regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility. A weaker aspect is that these lesson observations do not focus consistently on evaluating the impact of teachers' actions on pupils' learning so as to further improve achievement in their subjects. Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Governors meet their legal responsibilities and communicate well with parents and staff. This has helped develop the school's accurate awareness of its strengths and weaknesses and contributes to its satisfactory capacity to continue to improve.

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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?	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	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
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	2

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?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

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?	3
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	3
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	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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

Thank you for welcoming me to your school. I know this month you are concentrating on learning about responsibility and I was interested to hear in your assembly about all the things which you are responsible for, both at home and at school. Part of my responsibilities is to find out what pupils think when I visit a school, so thank you for helping me so well with that.

Another of my responsibilities is to let you know what I found out, which is why I am writing you this letter. I have agreed with your teachers that the school is satisfactory which means that although there are lots of good things, there are also things which could be better (a bit like when you give yourselves an orange traffic light at the end of a lesson).

You told me that you're happy to help people and I was really pleased to see how well you help each other and the school. You told me that teachers give you time to think about other people which is one of the reasons you get on well and enjoy your time at school. You said your teachers are really helpful and I could see that when I watched your lessons. You also told me about all the interesting things you do in lessons, during breaks and after school and I could see these help you to learn 'new things every day'. Until recently, not all of you made as much progress in English and mathematics as some pupils in other schools, but your teachers have made a lot of improvements and I was pleased to see these are now showing in your results in your tests. Your teachers have good ideas about what they want to do next and I have made some suggestions to help them. I have suggested that they all teach younger pupils sounds and letters in the same way and to make sure that the youngest children have good opportunities to learn outside. I have also asked them to watch you and not the teachers when they go into lessons. This will help them decide how they can help you learn even more.

I really enjoyed meeting you and was only sorry I did not get enough time to join your lunchtime football club to see how good a coach your headteacher really is!

With best wishes

Nicola Davies

Lead inspector