



# The Winchcombe School

## Inspection Report

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**Unique Reference Number** 135079  
**Local Authority** West Berkshire  
**Inspection number** 294262  
**Inspection dates** 16–17 January 2007  
**Reporting inspector** David Marshall

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary	<b>School address</b>	Maple Crescent
<b>School category</b>	Community		Shaw
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11		Newbury RG14 1LN
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed	<b>Telephone number</b>	01635 232780
<b>Number on roll (school)</b>	320	<b>Fax number</b>	01635 232789
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body	<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Mauline Atkins
		<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Sue Varley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	Not previously inspected		

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<b>Age group</b> 3–11	<b>Inspection dates</b> 16–17 January 2007	<b>Inspection number</b> 294262
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## **Introduction**

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## **Description of the school**

The Winchcombe School is a newly opened, larger than average, primary school formed by the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. There is a special needs resource for pupils with Speech and Language difficulties and an attached Language and Literacy specialist provision on the site. On entry, children's attainment is well below average with the level of language development being poor. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is above average.

## **Key for inspection grades**

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 4

The newly amalgamated Winchcombe School was opened in September 2005. After a period of significant difficulty during the amalgamation, the experienced headteacher, on joining the school, rightly made creating a stable staff to improve pupils' behaviour the first priority. As a result, despite the misgivings of a small minority of parents, behaviour has improved and the school now has a calm atmosphere which contributes well to learning. Pupils agree that behaviour is better and most now enjoy school. The headteacher, deputy and assistant head teacher have also competently created a unified vision of what the school needs to do to improve. Teamwork is good and everyone is playing their part in moving the school forward. Despite these improvements, the school's overall effectiveness is unsatisfactory, because pupils' achievement remains inadequate and the standards they reach are not as high as they should be.

Although there is some good teaching, too many lessons have shortcomings. Teachers are inconsistent in their expectations of pupils' performance and do not always set tasks which are sufficiently challenging. The pace of lessons is often too slow. Teaching does not meet the learning needs of pupils well enough to enable them to overcome fully their previous underachievement. Marking is inconsistent and pupils are often unclear about how they might improve. Teachers try to prepare different activities to match pupils' particular needs, but too often are unsuccessful. Conversely, there is good teaching for those pupils with learning difficulties and for those with specific speech and language problems because work is matched effectively to their needs. The senior leadership team has accurately identified the school's weaknesses and, with the full support of the staff and governors, is building an effective team which is systematically addressing them. The impact of recent changes means that the school is improving and shows that it has the capacity to improve further.

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of experiences and skills, but their attainment is well below that found nationally. Due to the sound provision, they make satisfactory progress in acquiring basic skills but by the time they start in Year 1 standards are still below those expected for their age.

Pupils' standards by the end of Year 6 last year in English and mathematics were below average and represented significant underachievement for many. This was because some teachers' expectations were too low. Recent amendments to the curriculum mean that pupils say they now enjoy their lessons. Pupils particularly benefit from the good range of different experiences through the many extra-curricular activities, and those few lessons which link learning in different subjects together. The school provides good pastoral care and support and has established a useful partnership with a range of specialist agencies to help meet the many different needs of its pupils.

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires significant improvement, because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvement is required in

relation to the inconsistencies in teaching in order to raise pupils' standards and achievement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise achievement and standards in English and mathematics, making sure that activities match what pupils need to learn next and are sufficiently challenging.
- Improve the quality of teaching, especially raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, making sure that learning is brisk and purposeful and using marking more effectively to guide pupils on how to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 4**

Children enter the Foundation Stage with a wide range of experiences and skills, but overall their achievements are significantly lower than those typically found. They make satisfactory progress but few are working at the expected levels for their age by the end of the Reception year.

Standards throughout the school are below average. The 2006 national test results for Year 6 pupils were below average in English and mathematics, and very few pupils attained the higher levels. Although standards remain too low, there are now elements of progress which are satisfactory. The school's focus on writing has improved the progress and standards among younger pupils. However, this improvement is not reflected consistently through the school and few pupils make sufficient use of their literacy skills in other subjects. Standards in mathematics are particularly weak and pupils lack confidence in applying their basic number skills to solving problems. There are pockets of good progress. Those pupils with significant language difficulties make good progress as their needs are carefully analysed and they are well challenged at all times. Similarly, those with learning difficulties are supported well and make good strides towards achieving their targets.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

The personal development and well-being of pupils are satisfactory. Pupils mostly enjoy school. Pupils' satisfactory spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is clear from pupils' improved behaviour and attendance. Pupils of all backgrounds feel included and supported. They feel safe at school and know whom to turn to if they have a problem. They have made a good start on adopting healthy lifestyles through diet and exercise. A particularly good feature is the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired through being able to grow and then eat their own fruit and vegetables. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and to the wider community through the effective school council. However, they are not well enough prepared for their future lives, either in school or out, because of their weak progress in basic skills, and their lack of experience of taking responsibility.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 4

Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because of the variations between year groups and classes. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory, although there are insufficient opportunities for the children to practise speaking. The teaching of early writing is good. There is good teaching for those with learning difficulties and for those with specific speech and language problems because there is a strong focus on matching work to their needs. Across the school as a whole, teachers set targets for the pupils but these are not challenging enough for the more able. Not all teachers insist on good presentation, and this results in some poor quality work and low levels of productivity. Skills such as using correct spelling and good handwriting are not emphasised enough. Support staff are not always sufficiently involved in working alongside pupils to support their learning. Teachers plan and prepare lessons making suitable use of inter-active whiteboards in their introductions. They make clear what is to be learned and explain tasks clearly. Most handle any incidents of inattention effectively. In some lessons, however, the pace is too slow and pupils lose concentration and interest. There are regular assessments of pupils' writing but guidance through marking is inconsistent. There are too many examples of unmarked work leaving pupils in doubt about how to improve.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school provides a good programme to support pupils' personal development and social skills. Good features include the extensive range of extra-curricular activities which contribute much to the pupils' understanding of healthy lifestyles and add to their enjoyment of school. One pupil said, 'The clubs are really good'. Pupils also enjoy the opportunities to perform their music and dance in community events. The support of staff from local businesses for reading and mathematics also contributes to pupils' enjoyment. Stimulating opportunities such as horse riding contribute much to learning and the social skills for those pupils receiving additional support in speech and language. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is good as their work is well matched to their specific needs.

There are insufficient links made between different subjects. Pupils have too few opportunities to practise and improve their writing and mathematical skills. There is an over reliance on undemanding worksheets in some classes which hampers pupils' writing. The curriculum in the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and recent improvements are proving successful in raising children's competence in writing.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. There are good procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of pupils. Staff are vigilant in meeting the needs of vulnerable pupils and have a secure grasp of child protection procedures. The support for pupils in the speech and language unit is good and contributes to their good achievement. The school works well with outside agencies to ensure that those with learning difficulties receive good guidance. There is a consistent approach to dealing with behavioural problems and pupils are clear about rules and routines. Staff in the Foundation Stage appropriately assess the children's progress and use the information to plan the next steps in learning. In the rest of the school the staff set specific targets for pupils. Evaluating pupils' progress in meeting these targets is satisfactory but the information is not always used to set challenging work for all groups, especially the more able. Marking is too variable. In some classes well focused guidance and encouragement spur the pupils on to do well but in others the marking is bland and does little to enhance learning.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Having completed an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses, the headteacher has introduced some effective measures. These include reshaping the curriculum and monitoring the quality of teaching to improve pupils' learning. She has created an effective management team, whose members feel valued. This, in turn, is helping to create a common purpose among staff.

Leaders and governors understand the school, and know what needs to be done to raise standards. There is still some way to go, especially in raising standards in English and mathematics. Leaders and managers have begun to improve the school environment, but resources are not yet of good enough quality to inspire pupils' learning and play. Following a turbulent period, through the amalgamation, leaders and managers have put into place measures that have had a positive effect on pupils' personal development and improved their behaviour. Governors are beginning to contribute effectively to planning for future improvement. As one of them observed, 'We know what we need to do to get better. We just need to get on and do it more quickly'. The current leadership and management provide the school with a satisfactory capacity 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	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	4
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	NA

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	4
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
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	4

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	4
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	3

<sup>1</sup> 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

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
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	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes

## **Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for welcoming us to your school. We enjoyed watching your lessons and talking to you about your school. This helped us to find out the good things about your school and the things that should be better.

We were pleased to see that you get along together well and behave well. We were particularly pleased to hear that you are enjoying lessons more. One of the main reasons for this is that your teachers have worked hard to make your lessons interesting and to make sure that you get the help in your lessons that you need.

At the moment, the school is not doing as well as it should and needs to get better quickly. Your headteacher, the teachers and the teaching assistants are working together as a team to make this happen. They have already made changes and many of you spoke to us about how these have made things better for you. We were pleased to hear this but we could also see that not all of you have been making the progress you should. This means that not all of you do as well in English and mathematics as most pupils in other schools. Your teachers have lots of good ideas on what they will do next so we have asked them to carry on making their improvements so that you can do better. We have asked them to make sure that the activities that they plan for you to do in lessons are just right for you and to give you lots of opportunities to try things out in lessons. We have also asked them to make sure more gets done in lessons, and that they show you what you need to do to improve your work.

Everyone at the school wants to make sure you do as well as you can, so some inspectors will visit your school again, to see how well you are doing. We are sure they will enjoy meeting you and your teachers as much as we did.

With best wishes

David Marshall

Lead Inspector