

Woodlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104881
Local Authority	Sefton
Inspection number	308694
Inspection dates	8–9 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Janette Corlett

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	364
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Mark Bocker
Headteacher	Mr Simon Grilli
Date of previous school inspection	17 May 2004
School address	Woodlands Road Formby Liverpool Merseyside L37 2JN
Telephone number	01704 876444
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodlands is a larger than average primary school situated in the residential village of Formby. The school population is predominantly White British and very few pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well below the national average. The school serves an established area of private housing with a high proportion of parents from professional backgrounds. When children first start the school, their knowledge and skills are above those expected of children of similar age. The school holds a variety of awards, including: Activemark, International Schools, Eco-School and ICT mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory education for pupils. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although within this there is some teaching that is good, and all teaching has some strengths.

The majority of parents are happy that the school takes good care of its pupils. They particularly appreciate the school's strong focus on teaching pupils to care for the environment and the way in which pupils are encouraged to take an active part in the development of the school's extensive grounds. However, a small minority of parents are concerned that pupils do not always make enough progress academically. Inspection findings support this view. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 are above average but progress is only satisfactory in respect of their starting points. This is because pupils of average ability and the more able are not always sufficiently challenged to reach their full potential.

Pupils' personal development and well-being are good. Pupils say they really enjoy coming to school, and they attend well. They have good relationships with teachers and feel that their concerns are listened to. Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and healthy because the school encourages them to respect themselves and one another and to take an active part in sporting activities. Their behaviour is good and, consequently, lessons proceed calmly and there is no disruption to learning. Pupils have outstanding opportunities to take responsibility within the school community. Older pupils effectively support younger pupils by acting as mentors and playground leaders. From their very earliest days in the school, pupils' willingness to help others in the local and worldwide community is outstanding. They are a real credit to the school.

Pupils experience a satisfactory curriculum which is enriched by a good range of outside visits and visitors to the school. They have the opportunity to learn French and are supported in this by the school's strong links with the local high school. Pupils appreciate the opportunity of taking part in a variety of after-school clubs. This adds to their enjoyment of school and encourages them to develop their individual interests and skills. In some lessons, the tasks and activities set are not sufficiently stimulating for the needs of all groups of learners. This limits pupils' creativity and their capacity to develop their thinking. Support and academic guidance to help pupils improve their learning are satisfactory.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. School leaders are committed to the welfare of the pupils. They work hard to maintain a stimulating learning environment and have developed a system for tracking the progress of individual pupils as they move through the school. However, the information gained from this is not used effectively by leaders to analyse and identify priorities for improvement. It is also not used by teachers to set challenging targets for pupils which are regularly reviewed. This explains why pupils of relatively high ability do not always make as much progress as they could. Self-evaluation of performance in the school is satisfactory but not as accurate as it might be. As a result, the school has been too generous in its judgement that its overall effectiveness is good. The school provides satisfactory value for money and a satisfactory capacity to improve. Effective steps have been taken to improve the school since the last inspection.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good. Children arrive in the Reception classes from a very wide range of pre-school settings. Most children have levels of skills and development which are above national expectations. Through good teaching they move on with their learning at a good pace. By the start of Year 1 the majority of children have securely reached the nationally expected levels for their age and are well prepared to begin the next phase in their education. Thorough induction arrangements help children to settle quickly into school. During the induction, parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's introduction to education. This results in strong links being formed with parents, which continue during the children's time in school. Children make good friends, treat each other and adults with respect and become happy learners. Teachers and support staff, led by a very forward-thinking leader, are managed enthusiastically as they all strive continually to improve the provision. There is good teamwork between teachers and their assistants and good procedures are in place to ensure that care and welfare have a high priority. Children are aware of healthy eating habits. They enjoy their fruit and are eager to run around. They also understand the need to wear a hat when outside in the sun! Teachers' planning and assessment take account of individual needs and all the areas of learning are covered. The indoor areas are interesting and provide a relevant and appropriate focus on personal development and basic skills, as well as the wider curriculum. The outside area replicates the indoor area, so children are able to choose which environment suits them best. This effectively supports a good balance between adult-led activities and those where children choose the path of their own learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the progress of average and above average ability pupils across Years 1 to 6, by using challenging targets which are regularly reviewed.
- Ensure that the tasks and activities set in lessons actively engage pupils of all ability levels in their learning and develop their thinking.
- Improve the school's procedures for tracking pupils' progress to enable school leaders to analyse effectively the school's performance and identify priorities for improvement.

A small proportion of the school's whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

At the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils reach above average standards. Based on their above average starting points, this represents satisfactory progress overall. Pupils with lower individual ability levels and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress due to effective support strategies and the school's good use of teaching assistants to help them improve. However, average ability and the more able pupils across Years 1 to 6 do not always achieve their full potential because they are given insufficient challenge to reach the highest possible standards. For pupils in Years 3 to 6, annual targets for improvement are set, based on their prior achievement at the end of Year 2, and are not updated in the intervening years. This means that many pupils actually exceed their annual targets and are not challenged to improve further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils feel safe and are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles. They say that bullying is very rare indeed. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. This is demonstrated by pupils' good relationships with one another and adults in the school. They enjoy quiet, spiritual reflection during assemblies, act responsibly and show respect for other cultures and traditions. Pupils' contribution to the community is outstanding. The eco-committee talks enthusiastically of their various projects to improve the school environment, and has a very mature understanding of sustainable resources and the importance of recycling. Similarly, members of the school council have organised a 'skipathon' to raise funds for various good causes, and this is supporting pupils in keeping fit. The school's preparation of pupils for their future economic well-being is good because they leave the school with good basic skills in English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers develop good relationships with pupils and have good classroom management skills. Recent improvements in the teaching of writing are already having a positive impact on raising standards. Where lessons are good, teachers show good subject knowledge and teach effectively and with enthusiasm. They make good use of 'talking partners' and role play to support pupils in contributing to discussions and extending their thinking. In other lessons, pupils do not have the opportunity to develop their investigative skills. There is over dependence in some lessons on published worksheets that are not sufficiently interesting and stimulating for all groups of pupils. This limits pupils' creativity and thinking development. Too frequently, teaching assistants take a passive role during class lessons, and this limits their effectiveness in helping pupils make progress. The quality of teachers' marking of pupils' written work is variable. In subjects other than English, marking does not identify the next steps in pupils' learning and this means that their progress is less rapid than it could be.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory and some elements are good, particularly the way in which the school makes maximum use of the local environment for enrichment. The school offers many extra-curricular activities, which are well supported by pupils and appreciated by parents. The importance of allowing pupils to practise their basic skills in reading, writing, mathematics and ICT through linking these subjects to other subject areas is recognised well within the curriculum. School leaders are working to develop this and plans are underway for a more creative approach to curriculum planning. Pupils' writing has improved recently due to the impact of the school's current involvement in a local network of schools, which are collaborating on ways of driving up standards in this area. Music is a strength of the school. Pupils enjoy singing and playing musical instruments and have many opportunities to perform in local festivals and events. Provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection, but pupils still have too few opportunities to use computers as an everyday working tool in the classroom. This contributes to the overall quality of the curriculum being satisfactory rather than good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of guidance and support for pupils' personal and academic development, though the support for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is better than for other pupils. Safeguarding procedures comply with statutory requirements and the school provides a good standard of pastoral care for pupils. Pupils feel safe and know that the adults in the school care for them and are always willing to help. Academic guidance is less well established in the routines of the school. A system for tracking pupils' progress is in place. This is used successfully to identify pupils who may require additional support for specific areas of difficulty in their learning. However, its full impact is yet to be seen in ensuring that pupils' targets are sufficiently challenging and that pupils have good enough individual guidance on how they can improve. Good links with outside agencies support the inclusion of vulnerable pupils in the life of the school community.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Many senior leaders are comparatively new to their roles and it is too early to see a measurable impact of their work in terms of improving progress. Targets are set for pupils at the end of Year 6, but school leaders do not ensure that these are sufficiently challenging for all pupils as they move through the school. The school's self-evaluation shows that while leaders understand its main strengths and weaknesses, this understanding is not firmly based on a secure analysis of tracked performance of pupils. This means that leaders' actions are less effective in identifying priorities than they could be to accelerate progress for all groups of learners. The impact of the work of the leadership team is clearly demonstrated by pupils' good personal development and the way in which pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported in making good progress. The headteacher and school leadership team work very hard to provide a safe and attractive learning environment, actively promoting pupils' outstanding contribution to the community. They provide good role models for pupils, treating them with respect, fairness and courtesy. Pupils respond to this with good behaviour, willingness to take on responsibility and very positive attitudes to learning. Overall, governance is satisfactory. Governors are very involved in the life of the school and provide satisfactory support and challenge for school leaders.

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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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
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	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 extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
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?	3
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.

Annex A

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	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your warm and friendly school. We especially enjoyed talking with you at lunchtime and joining in with your assemblies. Special thanks to the eco-committee, the school councillors and the group of pupils who gave up their time to tell us about all the good things that happen in your school. I was particularly impressed with your very mature understanding of environmental issues and how you work so hard to help save energy and look after scarce resources. I really hope you will be able to grow lots of plants in your greenhouse made out of recycled plastic bottles!

We found your school to be satisfactory. This means that there are good things happening, such as the way you enjoy coming to school, feel safe, behave well and look after one another. It also means that there are some things which should be better. Not all of you make as much progress as you could do, and some of the activities you are given in lessons are not challenging enough to make you really think and learn even more new things. To help you, we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do these things.

- Improve the progress most of you make across Years 1 to 6. We have asked the teachers to make sure you are challenged well by setting you targets which are regularly checked to help you do better.
- Ensure that in all lessons you are given more exciting and interesting activities that really make you think and want to learn more.
- Use the information they have about your school and your progress to show them how they can continue to make your school a better place to learn.

Your teachers know all about this and are working very hard to help you. You told me how much you like them and how kind they all are. In return, I am asking you to help them by always trying to do your very best. Once again, thank you all for talking to us and looking after us during our inspection. Best wishes for the future.