

Warden Hill Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109562
Local Authority	LUTON LA
Inspection number	310025
Inspection dates	9–10 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	354
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Hayley Betts
Headteacher	Mr Mark Welch
Date of previous school inspection	8 March 2004
School address	Birdsfoot Lane Luton Bedfordshire LU3 2DN
Telephone number	01582591386
Fax number	01582561449

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average junior school on the northern outskirts of Luton. Since the last inspection, the school's intake has become more diverse and the number of pupils from minority ethnic groups is now twice that found in primary schools nationally. The percentage for whom English is an additional language is slightly above average. The social and economic background from which pupils come is varied although the proportion eligible for free school meals is relatively low. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational need, varies somewhat from year to year but tends to be generally below average. Pupils' attainment on entry fluctuates somewhat from year to year but is broadly in line with the national average. A new headteacher took up post at the beginning of last term.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that is rapidly improving under the inspirational leadership of the recently appointed headteacher. His belief that 'all pupils have the capacity to be outstanding' has empowered the staff and made a difference to the way pupils feel about school. Parents are very appreciative of the school's work and many have noticed the renewed enthusiasm evident amongst the pupils and teachers.

Standards are average. However, test results in the last two years were lower in English than in mathematics and science, and boys' performed significantly less well than they should have done in English. Achievement is satisfactory and a number of initiatives introduced recently have begun to increase the rate of progress. Emphasis on raising achievement in reading is bringing about substantial improvement. The school is working on several fronts to raise standards in writing, particularly to ensure that boys and the most able pupils fulfil their potential. The introduction of a number of new initiatives means that there is now a secure basis from which to raise achievement.

Teaching is satisfactory and improving. Lesson plans generally address the needs of different groups of pupils well. Some teachers make very effective use of these plans and ask probing questions that push pupils to think deeply and engage as active contributors to their own learning. However, expectations are not consistently high and this sometimes leads to a lack of pace and to lessons that are not as stimulating as they could be. The curriculum is satisfactory and quickly improving: there is a clear determination to provide a curriculum that motivates and excites pupils and heightens their enjoyment of school.

In response to outstanding personal care and good quality academic support and guidance, pupils make good progress in their personal development. They are proud to be pupils at this school; they say that everyone is very friendly and kind, and there is a strong culture of respect for one another. Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and their self-discipline is particularly well developed. The high expectations that are being communicated by senior managers mean that pupils are beginning to develop greater belief in their own ability to succeed.

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory overall. Nevertheless, the headteacher provides outstanding direction to the school's work, ably supported by the deputy and assistant headteacher. Senior leaders are increasingly clear about what needs to be done to move the school forward. They are rigorously monitoring provision and have recently put in place thorough systems to track pupils' achievement. As a result, the right priorities are being identified and actions swiftly taken to improve. Although improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, indications are that the capacity to improve is good. The school has, rightly, recognised that the role of subject coordinators and year leaders is not fully developed and has begun to remedy this. Governors, though supportive, do not yet have systems in place for gathering information about the school's work for themselves.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement across the school, especially in English.
- Ensure that all teaching is at least good by ensuring lessons have suitable pace, interest and challenge for pupils.
- Improve the leadership skills of subject coordinators, year leaders and governors so that they can gather information for themselves and judge school effectiveness accurately.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

Standards have been broadly average in recent years, but there was a dip in standards in the 2006 National Curriculum tests. In 2007, test results were average overall although pupils gained higher scores in mathematics, and much higher scores in science, than they did in English. Boys performed significantly less well in English than girls or than boys nationally. The most able pupils did well in science and satisfactorily in mathematics but few reached higher levels in writing in English. Generally, the attainment of pupils of minority ethnic background was higher than that of other pupils. Currently, pupils are making satisfactory progress overall, with good progress in some lessons. However, progress is occasionally slower than it should be where lessons lack pace or where questioning is not challenging enough. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and those who are acquiring English as an additional language make good progress in response to effective support.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are highly responsive and enjoy working hard. Older pupils set a good example to younger ones and pupils make a good contribution to the community. They take their responsibilities seriously as prefects and representatives on the school council, and readily communicate their views about the school's effectiveness. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy living and develop a good awareness of how to keep themselves safe. Attendance is above average. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Social and moral development is particularly strong; spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils develop a clear sense of right and wrong and acquire outstanding social skills. They are polite, considerate, sensible and mature, and work and play very well together. They gain many personal qualities that should stand them in good stead in the future. Preparation for the next stage of their education is satisfactory overall, however, because pupils are making satisfactory progress in gaining basic skills in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The detailed feedback that senior managers provide ensures that teaching is improving and it is consistently at least satisfactory with some that is outstanding. Effective systems have recently been put in place for planning lessons across the three classes in each year group to ensure equality of opportunity for pupils. However, not all lessons move pupils' learning on quickly enough, or require pupils to think for themselves through probing questioning and challenging tasks. Systems for assessing pupils' progress have been completely revised and are now good. Teachers check pupils' attainment every half term through tests in English, mathematics and science and use this information to set half-termly targets. Pupils find the termly meetings in which they review their progress with their teachers very useful. Groups of pupils also have the opportunity to discuss their progress with senior managers. The school has put in place good systems for involving parents in their children's learning and parents are highly appreciative about the introduction of half-termly reports, which keep them very well informed about how their children are doing.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The introduction of a wide range of programmes to support groups of pupils who need extra help has begun to raise standards. Parents comment in particular about how the reading initiative has motivated boys who were previously reluctant readers. More time has been allocated to English and mathematics, and profitable links are developing between English and other subjects to help raise standards in writing. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social and health education so that they develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves fit, safe and healthy. The school's involvement in a sports partnership provides good opportunities for pupils to learn new sports. The school does not yet have a comprehensive programme for gifted and talented pupils, and it has identified the need generally to make greater use of visits and visitors to stimulate pupils' learning. There is an adequate range of clubs with plans to develop these further, especially for younger pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides outstanding personal guidance for its pupils, and staff are quick to resolve any difficulties or signs of unhappiness. Excellent systems, such as one-to-one interviews with their teachers and suggestion boxes, give pupils the chance to express any concerns, and they say that they know they are listened to. Safeguarding procedures are secure and robust. The family worker, though a relatively new addition to the staff, is already providing good support to pupils and their families. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and for those acquiring English as an additional language is good. Systems for academic guidance are good and developing well but, as yet, have not had time to make a distinct impact on pupils' progress. The majority of pupils know their targets for literacy and numeracy and are keen to attain them. Pupils' work is always marked and some marking is extremely helpful, particularly in English, but teachers' comments do not always make clear to pupils what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

In the short time since he took up post, the headteacher has successfully communicated his high expectations to the staff, pupils and parents and instilled in everyone a desire to make the school as good as it can possibly be. Staff morale is very high and teamwork is strong. High expectations are evident in the challenging targets that have been set and senior managers are using these well to drive improvement. Although it is too soon for the many changes to have had a measurable effect on standards, there are already signs that they have begun to raise achievement. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and English as an additional language is led and managed well, and recent developments mean that good leadership is in place for improving English. Senior managers are very accurate in their evaluation of the school's effectiveness so that planning for future development is sharply focused and geared to raising standards. However, subject coordinators and year leaders are not yet fully aware of how to use data to raise achievement and are not contributing as well as they could to improving the quality of teaching. Leadership and management are, therefore, satisfactory overall although senior leaders are highly effective.

The governing body makes a satisfactory and improving contribution to school effectiveness. The chair of governors provides very good leadership and has a detailed knowledge of the school's work. Governors bring valuable skills but some are newly appointed and in the process of learning about their role.

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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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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	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	1
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?	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?	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?	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	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
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

11 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Warden Hill Junior School, Luton, LU3 2DN

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed our visit very much and now I am writing to let you know what we found about your school.

It is a satisfactory school but it is quickly improving. The staff care for you very well so that you feel happy and safe. Many of you said that you love school and feel proud to be a pupil at Warden Hill Junior School. We were really impressed by how polite and helpful you are, and we liked the way you all get on so well together. Your behaviour is outstanding and your self-discipline is very good: we could see that by how well you behave in assembly and moving around the school. Your headteacher and the other senior managers have very high expectations and this is helping you to realise you can achieve anything if you try hard enough. We could see that you want to work hard and you respond very well when lessons are interesting and challenging. You are making satisfactory progress and you do well in some lessons. The school is doing all it can to raise standards and many of you have made a lot of progress recently with your reading. There have been many good changes in the school recently but it will take a bit longer for them to make a difference to the school's test results.

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and he has inspired everyone and made them realise that this can become a really good school. The senior managers are very clear about what needs to be done to improve the school and you can help them by always doing your best. We have asked them to make sure that:

- you reach higher standards, especially in English
- teachers who manage a year or a subject are fully involved in improving the school and that governors find out more about the school's work for themselves
- all your lessons are challenging, interesting and help you to make good progress.

I hope you enjoy the rest of your time at the school and I wish you well in the future.

Best wishes

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead inspector