

Woodley CofE Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109988
Local Authority	Wokingham District Council
Inspection number	310165
Inspection date	18 September 2007
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	242
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs A Wild/Mrs M Babington
Headteacher	Mrs A Dee
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2003
School address	Hurricane Way Woodley Reading RG5 4UX
Telephone number	01189 693246
Fax number	01189 696375

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. Inspectors evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: the accuracy of the school's latest self-assessment and whether appropriate plans and actions are bringing about further improvement. Is pupils' writing and girls' performance in mathematics improving? Is the quality of the school's curriculum and teaching and learning good enough to raise standards and lift pupils' achievements? Evidence was gathered from analysis of pupils' work, observation of lessons, conversations with learners, discussions with teachers and senior staff. Other aspects of the school's work were not inspected in detail.

Description of the school

This average-sized primary school serves a socially well-favoured and supportive community. Currently there are many more boys than girls on roll. The majority of pupils are of white ethnic origin, but there are also about 15% from a wide variety of other ethnic backgrounds. A few of these speak English as an additional language, and two are at the early stages of acquisition. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) is below average, but those with statements of special educational need (SEN), above average. Over the past twelve months, the school has experienced considerable changes in its staffing including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This popular school benefits from strong parental and community support. However, a survey conducted by the new headteacher earlier this year exposed a number of concerns about the school's performance. Inspectors' conversations with parents and analysis of the Ofsted questionnaires suggest rapid improvement in several areas, not least in respect of behaviour, the setting of homework and communication between home and school.

This type of enquiry has typified the early work of the new headteacher and her deputy. They have taught alongside teachers, analysed the school's performance data, reviewed the curriculum and consulted with staff and pupils. A clear and increasingly well-evidenced picture is emerging of a school where pupils currently receive a satisfactory quality of education. The inspectors agree with this evaluation.

Pupils are friendly and hard-working and they behave well. Most are socially confident and respond positively when in conversation with adults. Many have extensive general knowledge and genuine interest in their studies. They know how to keep fit and healthy and many demonstrate this by cycling to school and cultivating vegetables on the school's allotment. There has been enthusiastic response to the increase in extra-curricular activities and the recent school council elections were keenly contested.

The school has a history of pupils reaching above average standards in the national tests. This is as it should be given that the abilities of the children when starting school are frequently in advance of those usually found. In 2006 Year 6 achieved satisfactorily. Results were strongest in mathematics and science; performance in English lowered by weaker results in writing. However, the strong performance of boys in mathematics masked the fact girls were not doing as well in this subject. This pattern continued in the latest provisional results for 2007. Why is this?

Most pupils develop good levels of literacy during their time at school. Early reading skills are swiftly established and pupils taught systematically about letter sounds. Pupils' strong speaking and listening skills are extending through the recent introduction of talk partners to support class discussions. Although pupils produce a good volume of written work, teaching lacks consistency and teachers' expectations of what the pupils can achieve are not always high enough. Although most five year olds know how to hold a pencil, the mechanics of handwriting such as letter formation are not taught progressively through the school. As a result, a small but significant minority of pupils are slow to develop the fast, fluent style of which they are capable. Conversations with older pupils reveal that most are motivated when practising and applying writing skills across all subjects of the National Curriculum, but this approach is not yet firmly established.

In mathematics lessons the Year 5 and 6 pupils are divided into sets based upon their abilities. Teachers make clear to pupils what they are expected to learn, and question perceptively to check their understanding. However, too often the same activity is presented to the whole class and opportunities to extend or support learning are missed. There are proportionately fewer girls in the top sets and they tend to sit together during lessons. However, most are confident in their performance and their progress in lessons seen during the inspection was the same as the boys. Inspectors agree with the school's own evaluation that pupils have until recently, had too few opportunities for the problem solving and investigative work that would encourage the application of their good basic skills and lift achievement.

Throughout the school relationships between staff and pupils are good and contribute to the positive ethos for study. Teachers plan conscientiously and ensure that pupils experience a fuller curriculum than that reported at the time of the previous inspection. They build a reasonable knowledge of their pupils through their day-to-day contact and their attentive pastoral care. However, approaches to assessing and recording what pupils know, can do and understand are inconsistent. As a result, lesson planning is not always as incisive as it might be in setting consistently challenging work and ensuring a rapid pace to learning. These variations have also had a negative effect on the school's capacity to set realistic and challenging targets. Inspectors agree with the school's recent analysis that existing targets for the current Year 6 are unrealistic and unlikely to be met.

The headteacher, her deputy and governors are working together effectively in leading the school towards improved performance. For instance, their ongoing review of the school's staffing structure is successfully addressing the issues raised by the widespread changes to the school's personnel. The development of phase and curriculum teams is an important first step to creating greater consistency of approach across the school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

At the time of the inspection eleven, four and five year olds were attending a mixed age, Reception-Year 1 class during the morning session. The children are well cared for and have settled happily into the routines of school. Many are already working at the levels expected nationally for children at the end of their Reception year. For instance, at the start of the day the children enter class with confidence, self-register and settle swiftly to purposeful activities. They work co-operatively and are happy to talk and share ideas with each other and the adults. A discussion about autumn revealed their good knowledge of the seasons and weather. When discussing the date, most could count beyond ten and a few explained the difference between odd and even numbers. Several read names and captions on displays. The new nursery nurse has been quick to recognise the strengths of pupils' communication and language skills. She provides helpful activities that support the development of early writing skills including letter formation linked with work on initial sounds. Levels of co-operation amongst the children are high.

The headteacher has rightly queried why the profiles of the children leaving Reception in summer 2007 suggest that many were performing at levels lower than expected nationally. As a result, arrangements for the day-to-day assessment of pupils have been revised and now offer opportunity for more comprehensive evaluation of the children's performance across all areas of learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Increase the pace and demand of teaching to meet the needs and enthusiasms of all pupils and further improve their achievement, especially in mathematics and writing.
- Develop the use of test and assessment data to set accurate, challenging targets for individuals and groups of pupils.
- Build the staff team so that all develop their roles as leaders and managers.

A small proportion of schools 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.

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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
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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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	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 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	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?	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	4
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

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

26 September 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodley CofE Primary School, Reading, RG5 4UX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school earlier this month. I promised that I would write to let you know what we found out, so here goes...

Your school has gone through many changes over the past year and currently we judge it as satisfactory. I'm going to tell you what needs to happen so that next time the inspectors visit you they'll say your school is excellent!

Your friendly approach, good behaviour and positive approach to work are important strengths of the school. Even so, we think you could achieve more. We want the teachers to find out more about what you know and understand and to set you work that really makes you think hard. You can help by discussing your work with your teachers and thinking about the targets you are going to set yourselves. In particular, we would like to see further improvement in your writing and more girls doing well in mathematics.

We are pleased with the way that your governors and new headteacher are working together. They have made a good start to building the new staff team, but like any team it takes a while for the 'players' to get to know each other. You can help them best by continuing to work hard, making the most of everything your school has to offer.

With best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Protherough

Lead Inspector