

Widden Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115481
Local Authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	311945
Inspection dates	7–8 November 2007
Reporting inspector	Paul Sadler

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	370
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Britten
Headteacher	Tim Cooper
Date of previous school inspection	6 May 2003
School address	Sinope Street Gloucester GL1 4AW
Telephone number	01452 520571
Fax number	01452 311849

Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This large primary school serves a central area of the City of Gloucester. Most pupils are of Asian or Asian British ethnicity, although pupils belong to a wide range of ethnic and faith groups. The proportions who speak a language other than English at home, and of those who are at an early stage of learning the language, are well above average. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is also above average.

The school shares its site with a children's centre, which offers a wide range of services to families and children from birth onwards. While the centre is not currently managed by the school governors in a formal sense, there are very close links between the two establishments. The children's centre was not part of the inspection.

A major building programme was underway at the time of the inspection. This placed temporary restrictions on some of the facilities available, such as playground space.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Widden is a good school in which pupils achieve well. Staff have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving, and provide very good support, especially to those at an early stage of learning English. The school has a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, which is recognised by both pupils and parents. 'The school celebrates every child's festivals and culture,' is a typical comment by a parent. A large number of parents and family members attended an assembly at which pupils in the Reception classes demonstrated what they had learned so far this term. Pupils show a high degree of tolerance and understanding of others, and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding.

Pupils start school with skills and knowledge that are well below the levels expected of children of their age. They make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage and in Years 1 to 6 they make good progress. Standards attained in tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6 are in line with national averages. Pupils who enter the school after the usual starting point settle quickly and the many who need to learn English do so rapidly.

Pupils behave very well and are very clear about the school's excellent behaviour policy, which they believe to be fair. Staff supervise pupils well and most parents and pupils feel that any incidents of bullying are dealt with quickly and effectively. Learning mentors have had a good impact on improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. Attendance varies and has recently been below average, but the school does all it can to encourage and promote good attendance.

Pupils are taught well. Lessons are carefully planned to meet pupils' needs, following careful and accurate assessment. This is also used to set challenging targets for improvement, which are understood well by pupils. There are signs that this relatively new approach is now enabling pupils to make even better progress. This, together with the excellent care pupils receive, leads to outstanding care, guidance and support. In most classes there is very good support for pupils with language and other learning needs, but the support is not always deployed as effectively as it might be. In some classes, pupils make slower progress because they do not have the level of support they need. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 have an effective range of learning opportunities, and activities out of school time are good, including a breakfast club and opportunities in sport, art and drama.

The school is led and managed well. There is an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and good plans are in place to bring about improvements. Targets set are challenging and are usually achieved. A number of middle leaders are inexperienced in their roles, but they receive good support to develop further. The school has exceptionally good links with a very wide range of partners, including other schools, external agencies and community groups. Governors are very well led and have a good impact on the school's development.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Children make a satisfactory start to their education in the Foundation Stage. In some areas such as their language and physical development, they make good progress. Staff have a good understanding of children's strengths and work hard to meet their needs. They are, however, hampered by the unsatisfactory quality of the learning environment and lack of resources for some activities, which restricts the range of children's experience. For instance, the outside

area is small for the number of children involved and has no covered area, so children's opportunities for the types of outdoor experience that are expected are restricted. The leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

What the school should do to improve further

- Deploy teaching assistants and other support staff in ways that ensure that their wide range of skills is used to best effect in supporting all pupils, so that they make the best possible progress.
- Improve the learning environment and resources for the Foundation Stage so that children have better access to a wide range of stimulating learning experiences, to extend their learning skills and rate of progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children make satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage. Although at the end of the Reception Year a significant proportion have not yet attained the goals set for children of their age, the proportion that do so is increasing. In Years 1 and 2, pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, most attain the expected standards, although this is affected by new admissions, many of whom arrive with little knowledge of English. Pupils continue to make good progress in Years 3 to 6 and attain average standards in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 6. A good proportion of pupils attain standards that are above average. The school identified some weaknesses in science and has improved pupils' opportunities to carry out scientific investigations. As a result, pupils are now making better progress in science. They achieve well in other subjects such as art and physical education. Pupils with particular gifts and talents are given good opportunities to develop their skills further. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and language needs, make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual moral, social and cultural development is excellent owing to the outstanding provision the school makes to ensure that the very wide range of cultures and backgrounds represented is celebrated throughout the school's work. Pupils and parents report that they feel welcomed and comfortable, and that racism or intolerance among pupils is very rare. Pupils' behaviour is very good, in some cases mainly because of the excellent behaviour management strategies adopted by staff. Pupils are particularly keen on the house-points system and this helps them to behave well. The school's site makes playground supervision challenging but behaviour here has improved following training of midday staff and the use of learning mentors. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need for exercise and a healthy diet and of how to keep safe, for instance, when using the Internet. They enjoy school, especially the wide range of activities available. Pupils make a good contribution to the community, for instance, through the school council and performances to parents, and the school is rightly keen to develop this aspect of their education further. Skills pupils will need in adult life, including using information and communication technology and working independently and in teams, are developing well.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The school has good procedures in place to assess pupils and to monitor their progress, These are used well by teachers to plan work that is well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers use questioning and other techniques to ensure that pupils 'go the extra mile,' for instance when asking them to compare their estimations with the actual length of an object. Time is used well and work proceeds at a good pace. Work in literacy is marked well with useful comments on how it could be improved, but this approach is not always used in mathematics and other subjects. Support for pupils with learning difficulties or who are at an early stage of learning English is very effective; however, in some lessons pupils make slower progress because of insufficient support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

A very wide range of subjects and activities is available to pupils, including opportunities to study subjects such as drama and modern foreign languages. A good initiative is the chance for pupils to develop problem-solving skills in activities. There is a good range of additional activities out of school time, including some responding to the wishes of the community. For instance, pupils of the Islamic faith can study the Holy Qur'an with their parents and other members of their community. The curriculum is planned well to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Relative weaknesses are those already noted in the Foundation Stage.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pupils receive excellent care, a fact that is recognised by many parents who feel staff are approachable and committed to their child's educational success. All requirements to protect children are in place and the school has excellent links with agencies that support children and families. Pupils receive very good academic guidance and targets are increasingly well used to encourage higher rates of progress. Pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and how it compares with national standards. Pupils with particular needs receive very good support.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leaders and managers are rightly focused on ensuring that all pupils achieve as well as possible, and are skilled at managing this large, complex school. They have had particular success at developing an inclusive ethos in which all pupils are valued and their culture and success is celebrated. While not all pupils make outstanding progress as yet, this is a clear aspiration and there is evidence that it is within reach. For example, the new approach to setting targets is leading to more challenging work and hence improved achievement by pupils. Leaders and managers at all levels are committed to the success of pupils and have good plans to ensure their areas of responsibility improve. Governors are effective in monitoring the school's work and supporting its development. The school's priorities reflect those of the inspection team

and are appropriately focused on improving provision for the Foundation Stage, and ensuring that classroom support is used to best effect in supporting pupils' learning needs. Matters raised at the previous inspection have been improved, in part through collaboration with other schools, and the school is well placed to make further improvements.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	3
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
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?	1

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?	2
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 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	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

20 November 2007

Dear Pupils

Widden Primary School, Gloucester GL1 4AW

We very much enjoyed talking to you and seeing your work when we visited your school recently. We want to thank you for spending time with us. We especially enjoyed seeing the assembly led by the Reception children. We were impressed by the way you get on so well together, and by your enthusiasm for house points.

Yours is a good school. These are some of the most important things about it.

- You all make good progress and pupils in Year 6 get average results in tests and assessments.
- Everyone is treated equally and fairly.
- Teaching is good. Teachers are good at getting the best from you. Teachers and teaching assistants help you well if you find the work difficult.
- You have a good understanding of right and wrong and of how to keep healthy and safe.
- You behave well and tell us there is little bullying or racism.
- You enjoy school a lot, especially all the different activities on offer. These include sport, art, drama and modern foreign languages.
- You are cared for very well and teachers tell you how to improve your work by setting you targets, which you understand well.
- The headteacher, other staff and governors lead the school well. They want the school to be excellent, and are capable of achieving this.
- The school has very good links with other schools, your parents and with your community leaders.

We have asked the school to improve two things. The children in the Reception classes need better facilities and resources. The teaching assistants and other adults who help you in class need to be used in a better way so that you can always get help when you need it.

Yours sincerely

Paul Sadler Lead Inspector



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Lead Inspector