

Woolston Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	116110
Local Authority	Southampton
Inspection number	312179
Inspection dates	21–22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Beryl Richmond

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	151
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Steege
Headteacher	Mrs Julie Swanston
Date of previous school inspection	2 May 2003
School address	Florence Road Southampton SO19 9DB
Telephone number	02380 444447
Fax number	02380 399980

Age group	4–7
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Woolston Infant is a smaller than average school. Half of the pupils are from the immediate area with the others coming from various localities further a-field. Most pupils are of White British heritage, with the proportion from minority ethnic groups being about one quarter of the national average. A small number of pupils are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities is above average. There has been instability in staffing over recent years.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Woolston Infant School provides its pupils with a good education. Pupils are valued and develop well personally because of a good, caring and supportive ethos. They feel safe, enjoy their education and achieve well. Parents are enthusiastic about the school's work and value the staff's friendly and open approach. Typical of parental comments is, 'I'm very happy with the teachers and atmosphere in the school. Both my children are blossoming'. The school works exceptionally well with a wide range of outside partners, including schools, agencies and businesses, to help meet pupils' academic and pastoral needs. Strong parental links mean that they are able to be fully involved in their children's learning, for example, through a recent project on how to stay healthy. Volunteers regularly support pupils' learning.

From below average starting points overall, pupils make good progress because the quality of teaching and learning is good. By the end of Year 2, standards in reading, writing and mathematics were broadly average in 2007 although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels was below average. Standards are currently average, but improving in reading and writing. This is because of the practical teaching and learning of sounds and letters, more opportunities for role-play and other oral activities that stimulate pupils' thoughts and comprehension activities in guided reading sessions. Standards in mathematics are improving because of a good focus on problem-solving and more opportunities for discussion and explanation. However, the impact of these improvements in provision is lessened by weaknesses in the rigour in the target setting guidance given to pupils. Targets for improvement are challenging, but pupils do not use these targets well enough and do not fully understand what they need to do to improve. Teachers' marking of pupils' work does not always indicate clearly enough what pupils need to do to progress.

Because of good support, which is praised by parents, pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are achieving well. The school welcomes and responds promptly and effectively to the needs of pupils whenever they join the school, including the few pupils who are beginning to learn English.

The headteacher's leadership is strong. Parents commented appreciatively on how 'visible' the headteacher is. They like her approachability, and the fact that she knows the pupils well. A committed and enthusiastic staff team, which works together well, ably supports her. The governing body is a good 'critical friend'. Pupils learn well because the curriculum links subjects together in themes to make it stimulating and practical, with a strong focus on language and personal development. Good use is made of the school grounds to enhance pupils' learning.

Although the school has a number of strategies to try to ensure that there are no unnecessary absences, attendance remains below average. Some absences are due to sickness whilst others result from holidays taken in term time.

The school has improved since the previous inspection because it is committed to rigorous self-evaluation. Improvements in achievement and improving standards indicate that there is good capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to school and achieve well. On entry, there is a wide range of attainment, and starting points in personal and language development, in particular, are below

what is normally expected at this age. Good induction procedures help children settle happily. Effective relationships are established with children and their parents in many ways, including home visits at the beginning of the year and subsequently through the 'special memories' book.

A knowledgeable team manages this stage of learning well. Adults provide good routines and have high expectations of behaviour and achievement. Teaching and learning are good and consequently children make good progress. By the time they transfer from Reception to Year 1, their standards are broadly in line with the national average. Pupils are encouraged to become independent learners and there is a strong emphasis on language development. Interesting indoor areas provide a relevant focus on personal development and basic skills, as well as the wider curriculum. The children benefit from a covered outdoor area, which is being developed, so that they can work and play outside whatever the weather.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2, particularly those of the higher attainers, by giving pupils challenging targets, development points through effective marking and more opportunities to record.
- Improve attendance.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good and standards in reading, writing and mathematics are improving because teaching and learning are good, and many parents support their children's learning. The school recognises that not enough pupils have attained the higher levels in the past. Rigorous tracking of progress is now beginning to lead to higher standards in the future. Several Year 2 pupils are already working on mathematics extension activities at level 3, which is above the level expected at this age. Standards have improved in science since the previous inspection because pupils have more opportunities to investigate practically. Work is planned well to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities in all parts of lessons so that, for example, pupils needing to gain confidence in numeracy often have their own starting activity in mathematics lessons. In literacy lessons, pupils who struggle to develop reading skills work in a small group on sounds and letters that they find difficult to remember.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. They work together well, particularly in pairs, showing good levels of cooperation and consideration for others. For example, pupils sign to communicate when necessary and are proud of their skills. Parents state that the children 'support and accommodate each other'.

Pupils have a clear understanding of the school's expectations for their behaviour and the sanctions that might occur if they do not follow them. They helped develop the 'Golden Rules' and are keen to adhere to them. A parent commented, 'There is a very good system for rewarding good behaviour and work' and pupils say that they 'like having treats for good learning'.

Pupils understand the importance of leading a healthy life style and are proud of their diet and involvement in exercise including through walking to school using the 'walking bus'. One pupil described how not using the car helped the planet and pollution and that might help the rainfall.

Pupils make decisions in the school council, and Year 2 pupils participate in the 'Civic Award', which develops their understanding of citizenship well. Taking into consideration pupils' good personal development and average basic skills, their preparation for their future lives and learning is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers usually match tasks well to pupils' needs. Classroom environments are harmonious and relationships are good. Teachers usually have high expectations of pupils in terms of achievement and behaviour. Speaking and listening and thinking skills are developed well because of good questioning and opportunities for pupils to work with partners. Resources are good and activities stimulating, consequently pupils become more readily interested in their learning. Teachers, parents and pupils have good opportunities to discuss targets and progress together.

Sometimes pace in learning slows when teachers do not make their expectations clear enough or check on pupils' progress frequently during independent group work.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Although the main emphasis is on English and mathematics, the school provides wide and balanced experiences, which are adapted to meet the needs of its pupils. When teachers plan for pupils to work practically and to visit places, such as the opticians, pupils find learning interesting and exciting. Although pupils regularly record their mathematics on small white boards, there are insufficient opportunities for more formal recording of mathematics in pupils' books. Opportunities to record in other subjects are not always taken. The ways in which the school enriches the curriculum are good and help pupils develop socially. Visitors, including theatre groups and authors, raise pupils' awareness in many ways. Pupils take part in many musical activities. Parents and pupils are enthusiastic about the good range of well-attended clubs. The school provides well for pupils' personal, social, health and citizenship education and consequently the outcomes are good.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and safety are securely in place. Careful checks are made of adults working with pupils. Pupils say that they know an adult they can go to in school if they are worried and they and their parents are confident that action will be taken. Parents' comments confirm that the school is committed to meeting all pupils' needs, whether academic or personal, as soon as they arise. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and they have a thorough understanding of the needs of pupils they are supporting. The school is proactive in attempting to improve attendance, including not authorising holidays in term time.

Good systems for tracking pupils' progress are in place and consequently any underachievement is identified early and appropriate strategies are put in place. Pupils have targets to achieve, but their use is not yet rigorous enough to improve achievement further. Teachers' oral feedback

to pupils is good, but marking is inconsistent and does not always show pupils how they can improve.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Parents value the good leadership and management of the headteacher and other staff and their good impact on provision and pupils' achievement and personal development. Teaching and learning are monitored rigorously and regularly and the impact of this work is seen in good teaching and learning although this is not consistent in all classes.

Responsibility for school improvement is widely shared and the school knows itself well because monitoring is regular and rigorous. The School Improvement Plan is focussing on the right areas for improvement, such as improving standards, particularly those of the higher attainers. Reporting to governors has become more evaluative. At their request, information on pupils' progress towards reaching the challenging targets set for them is made available on a regular basis. They support the school well.

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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	2
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?	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	3
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?	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?	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?	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

01 February 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Woolston Infant School, Southampton, SO19 9DB

Thank you very much for helping Mrs. Handford and myself during the inspection, especially by talking to us about your work and everything that your school provides for you. We enjoyed our visit to your school and think that your school is good.

Here are the things that we liked best about your school.

- You are usually kind and friendly to other people. You think that the 'Golden Rules' are fair and you understand well what will happen if you break them.
- You usually work hard and are doing well.
- You help in school as monitors, as school council members, as buddies and in many other ways.
- You enjoy school.
- You are an important part of a strong caring school community. Teachers and parents are working together well to give you a good start at school.
- You are taught well and have lots of interesting activities to enjoy.
- Your headteacher knows you all well and is always trying, with all the other staff and governors, to make your school better.
- You have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and enjoy all the physical activities that the school provides during and after school.

We have asked your school to help you to achieve higher standards by the time you leave at the end of Year 2. We would like you to use your targets for English and mathematics even better so that you know how to improve your work and can work more successfully on your own. We have asked teachers to give you more help when they mark your work so that you can see how to improve. Also we think that you should not only write what you are working out in mathematics on your white boards but also more often than you do now, write your sums in your books.

Finally, so that you can learn as well as possible, please try to attend school regularly and to arrive on time.

We would like to send you our very best wishes for your future success.

Beryl Richmond

Lead Inspector