

Widford School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117176
Local Authority	HERTFORDSHIRE LA
Inspection number	312524
Inspection date	22 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith 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	39
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ms Nicky Parker
Headteacher	Mrs Diane Penn
Date of previous school inspection	3 June 2003
School address	Ware Road Widford Ware Hertfordshire SG12 8RE
Telephone number	01279 842681
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This very small primary school serves the village of Widford. The social circumstances of most pupils are similar to those typically found. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is about half the national average. Almost all the pupils are from White British backgrounds. The school has gained the National Healthy Schools award, the Hertfordshire Quality Standard for the Foundation Stage and the Sports Active Mark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Widford is a good school, which has made across-the-board improvements since its previous inspection. It deserves and gets the overwhelming support of parents, who are unanimously positive about almost all aspects of the life of the school. Their views are encapsulated by the parent who wrote, 'The school makes the children independent and confident and, at the same time, secure and happy'.

The school's nurturing ethos is at the heart of its success. The outstanding care, guidance and support that staff provide for pupils and their families ensure that pupils thoroughly enjoy school and learning and they achieve well both in their academic and their personal development. They are prepared well for the next stage in their education. Pupils work hard in lessons, have very positive attitudes and their behaviour is good. As one pupil commented, 'We are friendly and everyone treats each other kindly'.

By the end of Year 6, standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science, and pupils make good progress. Under the high quality leadership of the headteacher, all staff have been determined to quicken pupils' progress and raise standards. There is a clear vision for the school's improvement and, because there has been an increased rigour in the school's systems for checking provision and pupils' progress, this has resulted in good and well-founded development plans. Amongst other improvements, there have been changes made to the approach to the teaching of English and mathematics. This has been successful and pupils, particularly in the two junior classes, now make rapid progress in both subjects. In the Key Stage 1 class, the school is aware that too few pupils gain the higher level by the end of Year 2.

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the school's curriculum. The trigger for quickening pupils' progress has been the effective manner in which teachers now use assessments as part of lessons. They involve pupils in their learning by making objectives clear and by being explicit about what pupils have to do to meet the aims of lessons. In the best lessons, staff require pupils to mark their own work against the stated success criteria. This helps pupils to understand what is expected of them, and how each lesson contributes to moving towards their targets. However, these new arrangements are not yet fully embedded in all lessons.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage are currently taught alongside younger children who attend the pre-school in the mornings. They also benefit from good quality separate, direct teaching mainly focused on the development of their language, literacy and mathematical skills. In the afternoons, they join the five infant pupils. Children enter the Foundation Stage with skills similar to those typically found. They make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, almost all reach the expected levels in all areas of learning. The organisation of the class is good and it enables children to experience a rich range of interesting activities. Systems for assessment and planning are good. Staff ensure that there is a very good balance between work directed by adults and activities that the children choose for themselves. Learning is enhanced by effective use of the outdoor learning area.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels at the end of Year 2.
- Embed the good quality assessment arrangements into all lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well and reach well above average standards by Year 6, particularly in English and science, from average starting points. Pupils make good progress in Years 1 and 2, though the school is quite rightly concentrating on ensuring that more pupils attain the higher level by the end of Year 2. Pupils continue their good progress in the two junior classes. Current Year 5 and 6 pupils are on course to attain high standards in English and science and above average standards in mathematics. No groups underachieve. Because there is good, well-organised and targeted support for slower learners, these pupils progress as well as their classmates.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils' outstanding enjoyment of school is demonstrated by the good levels of attendance. Pupils are very proud of their school and are articulate and thoughtful in their relationships with other pupils and adults. Older pupils take particular delight in looking after younger ones and the highly developed sense of community and responsibility ensures that lonely or quiet pupils are included in activities at break and lunchtimes. Because the provision for personal education is very good, part of which includes gaining the Healthy Schools award, pupils are clear about how to keep healthy both from the point of view of the food they eat and, in particular, the necessity for regular exercise. Pupils also have a good understanding of how to keep safe. As one pupil said, 'We keep safe because our teachers help us to understand how important it is'. Pupils know who will help them with any personal difficulties and they benefit from the school's very small size that enables all adults to know each pupil well. Pupils' good behaviour, supported by effective management from the staff, provides the basis for the close family feel of the school and has a positive impact on pupils' achievement. As one parent suggested, 'There is no opportunity for children to melt into the background and each individual is given the chance to shine and perform.' This was demonstrated well during the inspection when three pupils led a good assembly on scientific forces.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is evident from their good attitudes to learning. Classrooms are characterised by a calm and purposeful atmosphere in which pupils concentrate well, co-operate effectively and thrive in their learning. This is also evident in the high quality of the presentation of their work. The recent improvements in assessment, including in teachers' marking, are paying dividends in that pupils' books show that they are clear about how well they are doing. However, this good practice is not sufficiently evident in all lessons. In the previous inspection, there was a weakness because pupils were given printed worksheets that were not matched to

their abilities. This weakness has been removed and is now a strength. Activities are of good quality and are well-matched to pupils' different ages and abilities. In addition, staff now question pupils well and make good use of their responses to adjust their teaching.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

There have been many improvements in the curriculum since the previous inspection. All national requirements are now met and the previous weakness in the curriculum for information and communication technology and its use across other subjects has been removed. One factor in the pupils' enjoyment of lessons is the clever linking of subjects which helps to make learning real. For example, the recent focus on the Fire of London included good work on light and dark in science, a wide range of writing and Foundation children learned about shadows. Although recent improvements in accommodation have strengthened opportunities for physical education (PE), the curriculum for this subject had already been reviewed and developed considerably since the hall was made available for PE in the autumn term. Curriculum focus weeks for the whole school, such as those for science and healthy eating, help to capture the interests and ideas of pupils and they contribute well to the organisation of these events. Many parents commented positively on the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided for pupils. Pupils said that they thoroughly enjoy these, particularly those that focus on sport.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Pupils' welfare is paramount. Procedures for safeguarding and protecting pupils are very well organised and fully established. Staff know pupils well and they give careful attention to individual needs, ensuring successful learning. Vulnerable pupils are quickly identified and effective programmes are put into place to ensure that these pupils' needs are met. There have been considerable improvements in the arrangements for tracking pupils' progress and setting targets. Staff's regular assessments of pupils' progress ensure that challenging targets are set and met.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good, enabling pupils to achieve well by the time they leave the school. The vision and determination of the headteacher to ensure a good education as well as high quality care have rubbed off on all the staff who share the head's commitment to strengthening achievement even further. They work closely as a team, supporting each other and are firmly focused on improving pupils' performance. Considerable rigour and structure have been brought to the self-evaluation procedures, which are of good quality. This has led to significant improvements in important areas such as the curriculum for English and mathematics. In addition, the energy and time that have been put into improving the school's accommodation and environment by staff, parents and governors are paying dividends and the school's effectiveness has improved since the previous inspection. This commitment and improvement demonstrate a good capacity for further improvement. Governance is good and school leaders are held to account well by the committed and well-informed governors.

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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?	2
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	2
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	1
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?	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

23 February 2008

Dear Pupils,

Inspection of Widford Primary School, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 8RE

Thank you for welcoming me to your school when I visited you recently. I enjoyed meeting you and watching you learn and play. I was pleased to hear that you really enjoy school and learning. Your parents also told me that you like school.

Yours is a good school. You told me that you feel safe in school and I can see that this is because the staff take excellent care of you. The adults work hard for you and the teaching is good. I was impressed with your behaviour around school and in lessons and with how well you learned. You know your targets and how to improve your work. As a result you achieve well in English, mathematics and science. Your progress overall is good.

I have asked your headteacher and teachers to do two things. Firstly, I have asked that more pupils reach the higher levels at the end of Year 2. Secondly that your teachers make sure that they make clear what your objectives are in all lessons and make sure that you reach them.

Best wishes for the future.

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector