

Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117348
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	312580
Inspection dates	2–3 July 2008
Reporting inspector	Paul Cosway

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Paul Aylott
Headteacher	Mr John Stephens
Date of previous school inspection	2 February 2004
School address	Watchlytes Welwyn Garden City Hertfordshire AL7 2AZ
Telephone number	01707886222
Fax number	01707886333

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Watchlytes School is an average sized primary school with an attached Nursery. The school population represents a mix of backgrounds, but pupils are mainly White British. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is also below the national average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is close to the average nationally, but there are fewer than average with statements of special educational need. On entry to the school, standards are close those expected for the children's age.

The school has a number of accreditations, including Healthy Schools and Investors in People.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Almost all parents are very pleased with the quality of education that this good school provides for their children. Pupils progress well in their learning because of effective teaching, a good curriculum and their positive attitudes to school. By the end of their time in this school, pupils reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Standards are high in physical education and information and communication technology (ICT). Writing standards are above average, but in some classes insufficient attention is paid to developing the accuracy and fluency of written work. Pupils' personal development is good. They grow spiritually, morally and socially to become confident and considerate young people. This is an inclusive school which successfully meets the needs of all learners. Individual attention and support ensure that all pupils make good progress, including those whose first language is not English or who need additional help with their work. Pupils really enjoy coming to school and this is one of the reasons why attendance is above average.

Pupils respect and value all that the staff do for them, and their needs are respected in return. The school works hard to provide an up-to-date education that meets learners' needs. It has redesigned the accommodation, which now provides spacious, well-equipped classrooms, excellent ICT facilities and outstanding outdoor areas. Much of the teaching is good, with interesting and stimulating lessons, so that pupils enjoy learning. Relationships are very positive and behaviour is excellent, as a result of teachers' consistently effective class management. Pupils learn to work well as part of a group. This, along with the good progress they make in English, mathematics and ICT, ensures that they are prepared well for their future lives.

The headteacher, with very effective support from the deputy headteacher, leads the school well. There has been good progress since the last inspection as a result and the school is well placed to continue to improve. The headteacher works closely with a governing body, which carries out its duties well. Coordinators monitor and lead work in their subject areas effectively. Action taken on key areas in the school improvement plan is already having an impact. Changes in the programmes of work and lesson planning for mathematics and English have led to raised standards this year. Work has been done to improve the tracking of pupils' progress. However, it is not yet providing sufficient information to ensure that they are set appropriate targets and that their progress monitored rigorously over time.

The curriculum is good and enhanced by a wide range of visits and visitors, as well as after-school clubs and sport. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities. The school's emphasis on health and fitness ensures that they can readily explain the reasons for taking regular exercise and enjoy eating healthily. Child protection and health and safety procedures are all firmly in place. Pupils agree that they are safe and cared for well in school.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well, so that by the time they leave Reception most have reached the standards expected of them and many are working above that level. This is due to the good level of support they receive and the high expectations for behaviour. Children's personal and social development benefits as a result and they are developing good confidence and self-esteem. They are forthcoming and friendly; keen to share their ideas and discuss the day's events. There is good emphasis on learning basic skills in literacy and mathematical development. The outdoor

space is used well to support children's learning. Sessions are balanced to provide a range of activities that are directed by adults or that children choose for themselves. Sometimes, however, opportunities and resources for play activities are not used well enough to reinforce previous learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Extend the tracking systems to monitor pupils' progress rigorously and allow the school to make informed interventions when they fall behind their targets.
- Provide regular opportunities for pupils to review and improve the quality of their written work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Almost all pupils, including the most able, make good progress through the school. Results in the national assessments for pupils in Year 2 have varied considerably over the years and have often been above average. In 2008, they are close to average, which represents good progress from their starting points. In Year 6, standards have been consistently above average over the past three years. In mathematics, pupils have above average skills and are competent in solving problems. Their knowledge and understanding of science is also above average. In English, standards in speaking and listening and in reading are high. However, while pupils write often and at length, they have too few opportunities to revisit their written work to improve it. They receive insufficient specific advice on how to improve the accuracy and fluency of their writing.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are confident of a positive response from adults in the school because relationships are good and they feel valued and included. They understand how to keep themselves safe and know that any concerns they may have are dealt with effectively. They have an excellent understanding of how to follow a healthy lifestyle and their endeavours in sporting activities confirm that they are keen to be active. As members of the school council or peer mediators they make a good contribution to the life of the school. They make members of the local community feel welcome in school when, for example, they welcome grandparents to the 'Teddy Bears' Picnic'. The skills that will help pupils towards their future working lives are developing well. Pupils understand right and wrong and grow into socially confident young people. Some aspects of their cultural development are good. They have opportunities to sing at the Albert Hall and visit national museums, but pupils are not secure enough in their understanding of the contribution that people from different backgrounds make to Britain.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers throughout the school plan and manage lessons well. They assess pupils accurately and plan work that meets their needs. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and explain work carefully so that pupils understand what they have to do and are confident that they can succeed. However, some introductions and explanations are too long and this reduces the time that pupils have to work independently. Technology is used effectively to make

teaching and learning interesting and stimulating. Teachers use their interactive whiteboards very well to make teaching points clearly and pupils enjoy this. Teaching assistants give good support to those pupils who need additional support.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school provides a good range of activities, which helps pupils to learn in an enjoyable and stimulating environment. Pupils produce presentations, animated films and newspapers using computer technology and the school has had considerable success in local and national sporting competitions. There is good emphasis on music, design and technology, and art and design. There is a varied programme of educational visits, including residential visits for three year groups. Pupils' experience is enhanced by the excellent range of activities outside the school day. Personal, social and health education has a high profile in school and the coverage is good. The excellent grounds are used very effectively to develop physical, scientific and creative skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school is a nurturing environment where pupils are valued and respected. They are cared for very well, and the required procedures are in place to keep them safe. Pastoral care is a strong feature of the school's work, so that all pupils are supported in their learning and personal development. The school involves parents and carers fully in the process of helping their children learn. The level of attendance would be even higher if families did not take holidays in school time, in spite of the school's sterling efforts. The systems for tracking pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently detailed to give an overview of learning from when they first start in the Nursery until they leave in Year 6. Nevertheless, pupils are clear about their individual targets and can explain clearly what they should do to achieve the next steps in their learning.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher is about to retire after leading the school for the past 20 years. He has brought about significant improvement, for example in the quality of teaching, and has and greatly increased the opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to develop their skills. He identifies areas of weakness, monitors the work of staff effectively and is an excellent budget manager. Professional development has a high priority. As a result, teachers are confident and knowledgeable practitioners. This is helping to raise standards throughout the school. Teachers are fully accountable for their pupils' progress and are set challenging targets. Governors monitor the work of the school well. Subject coordinators take responsibility for their subject areas and lead them effectively. The recently appointed deputy headteacher is a strong addition to the leadership team and has already begun to review and revise tracking systems, resulting in earlier intervention for pupils not making the expected progress.

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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	1
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	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

4 July 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Watchlytes Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2AZ

Thank you very much for making us so welcome in your school. It was a pleasure to talk to you. We particularly enjoyed seeing the work that Year 6 have done using computers, it was very varied and of a high quality. We would like to say a special thank you to the children we met at lunchtime, who told us about what it is like to be at your school. We were very impressed with the ways all of you work together and help each other.

You all told us how much you like your school, and we liked it too. It gives you a good education. You feel safe and cared for because the school looks after you well. By the end of Year 6, you have made good progress. You are better at reading and mathematics than most children in other schools. Your behaviour is excellent and you enjoy your learning.

The teachers in charge of the school are leading it well. Your headteacher and all his staff are determined that you will have a good education. Like you, we wish him a long and happy retirement. We have asked the staff to make sure that you get time to work on, revise and improve your written work. We have also advised them that they should measure your progress carefully throughout your time at school, to ensure that you do not fall behind your targets in English, mathematics and science.

Once again thank you for being so friendly to us. Keep doing your best and enjoy your time in your lovely school.

Yours sincerely

Paul Cosway

Lead inspector