

# Wood End School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	117358
<b>Local Authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	312585
<b>Inspection dates</b>	27–28 November 2008
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Colin Henderson

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	431
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr Gareth Huxtable
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs Ruth Cornish
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	1 March 2004
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Yeomans Avenue Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 3EF
<b>Telephone number</b>	01582 761 636
<b>Fax number</b>	01582 762 823

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Most children come from owner-occupied houses in the local area. The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is increasing, although it remains well below average. A small number are at the early stages of English language acquisition. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is lower than most schools of this size, although they have a wide range of complex learning needs. The attainment of most children starting in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is above that expected for their age. The school has received the Healthy Schools Award and the Active Mark.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 1

This is an outstanding school where pupils receive a first class education. The outstanding leadership of the headteacher, supported well by an excellent governing body, has used opportunities to bring in new staff to create a cohesive, very effective team. They have a very accurate understanding of how well the school is doing and work very successfully together to help all pupils achieve outstandingly well. The headteacher provides a relentless focus on raising pupils' achievement. She has established an excellent system for assessing and tracking the progress of each pupil. She and her staff use this information to set challenging end of year targets for each pupil and every class. Their positive 'can do' attitude, together with the pupils' desire to learn, helps them to achieve these targets. As a result, standards are consistently very high throughout the school.

The school provides a calm, happy learning atmosphere and excellent care, support and guidance, which are valued highly by pupils and most of their parents. This is reflected in such positive parents' comments as 'a fantastic, happy school' and 'we love its vibrant community'. The school encourages parents and other local schools and community organisations to work in partnership to promote pupils' well-being and enhance their learning. This helps to provide an excellent range of learning activities and extends pupils' achievement, for example, through science workshops provided by a local secondary school. Teachers plan work carefully to ensure that all pupils are included fully, for example those with visual impairment. So pupils enjoy coming to school, work hard to succeed and their achievement is exceptional.

Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They speak with great enthusiasm about their school and display an obvious sense of pride of belonging and contributing to such a lively, supportive community. Their behaviour in lessons and around school is mostly excellent. A very small number of parents are concerned about aspects of behaviour at lunchtimes. The school has high expectations of pupils' response to each other and very effective procedures minimise any disruptive behaviour. For example, older pupils enjoy taking responsibility for playing with the younger ones. The excellent care, support and guidance reflects the school's strong focus on each individual pupil. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils are happy, secure and ready to learn and this contributes significantly to their achievement. Because teachers and support staff are particularly effective in supporting individual pupils to improve their work in lessons, all pupils achieve very well and most attain very high standards.

Excellent processes to check and improve the quality of teaching and learning ensure that teaching is never less than good and often outstanding. Teachers plan carefully to meet the range of different learning needs and to build successfully on prior learning. Some teachers make excellent use of different ways of helping pupils improve their work, for example, self-assessment checklists and marking to show where pupils have achieved the lesson's objective. This excellent practice helps pupils raise their standards but it is not consistently effective in every class. Teachers are beginning to use the considerably improved resources for information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance pupils' learning, for example, to extend their story writing skills by editing and re-drafting. These opportunities are not fully developed and teachers plan to increase the use of ICT to support pupils' learning in more subjects.

The headteacher and her newly created school leadership team constantly encourage staff to look for ways to help pupils raise their achievement. They monitor lessons carefully and provide

training to improve any areas that are not as strong as others. They follow up evaluations to ensure that improvements are made. Many subject leaders, some of whom are new to their areas of responsibility, are very effective in improving pupils' achievement, for example, raising writing standards to a consistently very high level. The headteacher, her staff and governors have established excellent self-assessment procedures that give the school the capacity to maintain its high quality education and very high standards of attainment.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 1**

Outstanding provision enables the children to make excellent progress in all areas of learning and move on to their next stage at well above nationally expected levels. Thorough processes for assessing children's abilities when they enter Nursery and rigorous ongoing assessments enable staff to plan very effectively for the needs of all children. Strong links with parents, supported by an effective programme of home visits, and other pre-school providers ensure that the children's needs are met in every aspect. Well-informed planning, creative thinking and inspiring resources support children's learning and development very successfully, enabling them to build up high levels of independence, curiosity and imagination. Their concentration and obvious enjoyment are seen in the children's delight at using their observational skills to search for buried treasure in the sandpit and draw maps to show others how to find it. Children make excellent progress in their writing skills through both structured and unstructured opportunities to write and become authors. Staff provide a very good balance between activities that are directed by adults and those of the children's own choosing. They encourage a strong awareness of safety and children's understanding of their culture, fruits and healthy eating is developed very effectively through the story of 'Handa's Surprise'. The Foundation Stage leader and her staff work together to create a very effective team with high levels of consistency and a common sense of purpose.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Extend good practice to help all pupils know how to improve their work
- Further develop the use of ICT to support teaching and learning within subjects.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 1**

Pupils make excellent progress throughout the school because of consistently good teaching, their keenness to achieve and the school's exemplary use of assessment information to target areas for improvement. Teachers in both Years 1 and 2 ensure that work matches pupils' different learning needs. They challenge pupils to extend their skills and knowledge, especially higher attaining pupils, so most attain very high standards by the end of Year 2. This reflects the results of national tests. Pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 6 continues to be excellent. Many benefit from outstanding individual support and teachers' consistent and rigorous focus on helping them to achieve their targets. Assessment information shows that pupils achieve outstandingly well. For example, Year 6 pupils are on target to attain very high standards with two in every three pupils attaining standards that are well above those expected nationally in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the small number for whom English is a second language make excellent progress. For example, those with visual impairment benefit from outstanding support and the excellent use of resources designed specifically to assist with their learning. Pupils with particular gifts and talents attain

high standards in physical education and music, for example when performing in the keyboard band, orchestra or one of the various choirs.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

In an atmosphere of mutual respect each individual is valued and pupils grow in self-esteem to form excellent relationships. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. A multi-cultural focus week, together with 'Harvest 08' in which pupils looked at how food is distributed around the world, helps them to increase their knowledge of people's lives in other communities. Pupils know how to ensure their own and others' safety and their behaviour is exemplary. Their awareness of healthy lifestyles means that 'Huff and Puff' and the many sporting opportunities provided are extremely popular and very well attended. Pupils rate the school very highly and thoroughly enjoy school life which is reflected in their exceptionally high attendance rates. They develop a keen sense of responsibility and older pupils show considerable enterprise skills when managing fund-raising events and calculating shopping lists for the Food Aid project. Their personal qualities and outstanding basic skills mean they are very well prepared for the future. They leave the school as mature and responsible young people.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good overall and lessons are often outstanding. Planning is very thorough. It is matched carefully to what pupils need and what they already know so their knowledge, skills and understanding develop systematically. Teachers have high expectations. These are clearly evident when they explain precise success criteria to pupils for each lesson to help them become independent learners who are able to plan, check and assess their own work. Staff support this well by giving helpful on the spot feedback. Because relationships are so good pupils work well together as in Year 6 when sharing ideas to plan a newspaper article. ICT resources have been much improved but are not yet being used consistently to support learning across other subjects. Whilst most teachers follow the school procedures well, there are a few occasions where the support and guidance given to pupils are not as effective, for example, in the marking of pupils' work.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding curriculum has the pupils' needs at its heart. Pupils' capacity to achieve the exceptionally high targets set is supported by the strong emphasis on key skills. A current review of the curriculum is focusing on the development of skills for life. By linking different subjects, this creates an inspiring curriculum, which fully meets the needs of every child and develops a desire to learn. Each topic is enhanced by visits and visitors, while focus weeks and residential experiences enhance pupils' creativity and their understanding of local and wider communities. The curriculum is enriched through a very good range of well attended extra curricular clubs, for example in music and sport. The excellent links with parents keep them informed about their child's curriculum in annually produced documents and about methods of teaching through parent information sessions.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

The school's clear focus on pupils' individual needs underpins its outstanding pastoral care and academic guidance. This makes an enormous contribution to pupils' exceptional all-round development. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, especially those who are visually impaired, are very well supported. Highly effective arrangements for tracking pupils' progress help them know how well they are doing. They are used very well by teachers to challenge pupils to achieve even better. Many pupils say that they particularly value the times when teachers talk to them about their work and their next steps in learning. Procedures for pupils' safety and security are robust, clearly understood and implemented by all staff.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 1

The outstanding headteacher has established a 'progress driven' approach that staff and pupils understand and rigorously pursue. The school's statement - 'We are learning to achieve' - provides a strong direction to its work that has resulted in good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher's very effective leadership style is valued by staff and many parents - 'This is a well run school and she manages it very effectively'. She meets with her staff frequently to review pupils' progress and to check that each pupil is on track to achieve their challenging target. The headteacher and her increasingly effective senior leadership team check consistently that teaching is of a consistently good quality and supports excellent achievement. Working closely with a supportive and influential governing body, the headteacher has rapidly overcome budget concerns to build a strong staff team and raise standards to a very high level. Very effective management systems enable subject and key stage leaders to have a secure understanding of how well pupils are achieving and to target improvement. The staff team, supported by an excellent governing body, have established a vibrant school community in which everyone is valued. They are planning to extend pupils' understanding of their roles in, and contributions to, local and international communities.

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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?	1
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	1
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	1
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	1
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>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.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	1
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	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
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

**Annex B**

**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

1 December 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Wood End School, Harpenden AL5 3EF

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you about what you do in school, looking at your work and watching you learn. You clearly enjoy school and, together with most of your parents, you think that it is an excellent school - we agree.

We were pleased to see how well you get on together and this means that teachers can get on with the job of helping you learn. It was interesting to talk to school councillors about how they are helping to improve the school. I would like to say special thanks to the group of Year 6 pupils I talked to who told me all about life at Wood End.

You told us that you learn a lot in school and enjoy your work, especially the interesting clubs, visits and visitors. We think that your learning is excellent. Your teachers make your lessons interesting and they support and encourage you to try to achieve well in every lesson. Some of you are very helpful to each other when suggesting ways to improve your work. Teachers mark your work carefully and some are very helpful in pointing out how to improve your work. Mrs. Cornish and her staff are trying to help you learn as well as possible. We have asked the teachers to help all of you to understand what you need to do to improve your work. We agree with them that you need to use your ICT skills more in other subjects. It is pleasing to note that work on this has already started.

Thank you again for helping us to find out about your school and we hope that you will continue to be happy and to work hard.

Best wishes

Colin Henderson

Lead inspector