

Woodlands Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118448
Local Authority	Kent
Inspection number	312944
Inspection date	22 January 2008
Reporting inspector	Sheila Browning

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	379
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andrew Collard
Headteacher	Duncan Edwards
Date of previous school inspection	1 January 0001
School address	Hunt Road Tonbridge TN10 4BB
Telephone number	01732 355577
Fax number	01732 355147

Age group	7–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by an Additional Inspector. The inspector evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly in relation to more able pupils. Also, how effectively the assessment systems, including pupils' self-assessment, are being strengthened and used to raise teachers' expectations and provide greater consistency across the school. Other aspects of the school's work were not investigated in detail, but the inspector found no evidence to suggest that the school's own assessments, as given in its self-evaluation, were not justified, and these have been included where appropriate in the report. Evidence was gathered from lesson observations, the scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment data and documents. In addition, interviews were held with pupils, members of the governing body, senior and middle management, and the school improvement partner.

Description of the school

The school is larger than average. Attainment on entry to the school varies from year to year, but is broadly average. It takes pupils from a fairly wide area and from an increasingly wide mix of social and economic backgrounds. Most pupils are of White British origin, although the proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and speaking English as an additional language is growing. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above that found nationally and is high in some classes. For the past two years, the school has experienced some significant staffing instability, including at senior level. The school has attained Healthy School status, Green Flag (Eco) status, ICT Mark, Investors in People and Sports Activemark.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

The school's overall effectiveness is good because the happiness and success of every child is central to the school's work and individual achievements are celebrated. This is reflected in the pupils' excellent personal development and the strong inclusive nature of the school. These factors make a positive impact on the pupils and consequently they are developing excellent attitudes. They thoroughly enjoy school and all that it offers, and say they do not want to miss anything. This is one reason why attendance is above average. Pupils make a positive contribution to the school and wider community, through the Eco club, as 'power and water rangers' checking for any wastage and talking with senior citizens about their wartime experiences. Pupils' exemplary spiritual, moral, social and cultural development can be seen in their acute awareness of other faiths, cultures and traditions. For example, they experience the culture of different countries within the continent of Africa through research, presentations, music and dance groups. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe, healthy lifestyles. They run a healthy fruit bar and large numbers participate in sports activities and the first aid club. They develop good basic skills, which prepares them well for their future lives. For instance, pupils plan, organise and budget for a meal as part of a Year 6 French residential and children across the Key Stage lead pocket money stalls. Pupils also raise considerable funds for charities. Pupils enjoy responsibilities; 'Playground Pals' proudly described how they mentored children here and at the infant school. 'It's good because we have friends in all year groups.' The school council value their involvement in improving the school and have contributed to changes to the building and playground and helped to appoint the new headteacher.

The good care, guidance and support pupils are given are evident in their sensible attitudes and outlook. Support and intervention for those in need of additional help is of a good quality. Safeguarding arrangements are robust. Behaviour is good and pupils say 'We want to do our very best always.' Pupils say they enjoy learning because the curriculum is stimulating and they have numerous extra-curricular clubs to choose from. A good emphasis is given to teaching basic skills and developing pupils' personal and emotional awareness. Learning experiences are enhanced by a relevant curriculum that prepares them well for real life situations. Displays in the school and particularly in the gallery demonstrate the breadth of work pupils undertake. Visitors and educational visits, including residential, extend pupils' learning experiences well. For example, Year 5 produced their own opera with the Royal Opera House and all Year 3 pupils received cello lessons.

Pupils achieve well because good teaching ensures lessons are exciting so that pupils are motivated. Year 5 pupils were enthralled when their teachers, dressed as burglars with swag bags, scooped up toy puppies before setting off a sensor in preparation for their work about controlling and programming electronic roamers. Teachers use a variety of teaching styles and resources to provide a good range of interesting learning experiences. Classes are well managed and questioning is used effectively to reinforce learning. Lesson planning is detailed. Whilst work is generally well matched to the differing needs of pupils, and especially for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, on occasion, more able pupils are not always challenged to achieve their best. The school is keen to listen to pupils' views. A girls' only mathematics study group has been set up to find out what can be done to adapt learning to meet their needs more appropriately and those of the more able pupils.

Procedures for assessing pupils' work are improving. Pupils say about marking, 'Now we know and understand what to do to improve.' Older pupils are clear about their own targets but

younger ones are not. The school knows assessment is an area for development because it is inconsistent in English, mathematics and science and is developing in other subjects. The best practice involves pupils in identifying their own strengths and weaknesses but varies from class to class. As a matter of priority, the school now wants to make sure all pupils are involved in this process.

In the 2007 national tests, standards were average. Given pupils' lower starting points and the high proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, this reflected good progress. School data and inspection evidence confirm good progress throughout the school, and by Year 6 standards are average and rising. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional language achieve well because of good quality support. Challenging targets are generally met. The more rigorous approach to tracking pupils' progress is raising teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of. Teachers are now using this information to identify weaknesses in pupils' performance. As a result, teachers are well focused on improving pupils' skills. This is demonstrated in English, particularly writing, where pupils are encouraged to extend their use of vocabulary, and in science, teachers increasingly ensure pupils understand and use specific scientific terms. In mathematics, smaller ability streamed groups, with extra staff, enable a more rigorous focus on developing pupils' mathematical skills and knowledge. Teaching assistants make a strong contribution, especially helping those who need extra support to achieve well.

New leadership and management are demanding greater accountability from all staff and are moving the school forward quickly. As a result, it is well led. Staffing is being restructured, with clear delegation of roles, and staff say they feel 're-energised'. More robust systems are in place and there is a 'buzz' about the school. The school's self-evaluation is rigorous and accurate and everyone knows what is expected of them. Staff work together as a team with a shared knowledge and determination. Consequently, staff know what they need to do to improve further and are eager to do so. The school has taken successful action to improve pupils' achievement and raise standards, which reflects a good capacity to improve further. In addition to supporting the school, governors are increasingly proactive and challenge the school effectively. They are very focused on improvement and are informed by first hand knowledge. Partnerships with other schools, the local community and parents are excellent and their views are keenly sought. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, resulting in a significantly improved learning environment. As one parent commented, 'The school has strongly improved and we are so proud to be part of it.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Consistently challenge more able pupils in lessons so that they always achieve their best.
- Build on existing assessment practices, develop greater rigour and consistent systems to better track pupils' progress and involve all pupils in the process to help them improve their work.

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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 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	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	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

22 January 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands Junior School, Tonbridge, TN10, 4BB

Thank you for helping me when I visited your school. I enjoyed talking with you, looking at your work and seeing your lessons. I am writing to tell you that Woodlands is a good school.

Here are some things I found out:

- Teaching and the curriculum are good and there are lots of really exciting clubs and activities, which you told me you really enjoyed.
- Yours is a safe, happy school, you work hard, behave well and your attitudes are excellent.
- Most of you are making good progress in your learning and achieve average standards overall. You are improving all the time.
- Your teachers and all the adults look after you really well.
- You contribute outstandingly well to your school and the local community and you clearly know how to lead safe and healthy lives.
- Many of you take on responsibilities and carry them out really well.
- You know a great deal about different traditions, beliefs and cultures in the world and appreciate people's differences.
- The staff and governors are working hard together and with others to make Woodlands even better.

Here are the things I have asked the school to improve:

- To check that those of you who are more able are always given work that challenges you to do your very best.
- To build on the methods used to track your progress, and to check more frequently how well you are getting on, and involve you in more self-assessment opportunities.

You can help, too, by letting teachers know if the work you are doing is too easy for you and by making sure that you are more involved in assessing your own work.

Yours sincerely, Sheila Browning Lead Inspector