

Woodford Halse Church of England School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	122006
Local Authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	314187
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Reporting inspector	David Mankelow

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.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	329
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
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Terry Lifford
Headteacher	Mike Wills
Date of previous school inspection	13 June 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	High Street Woodford Halse Daventry NN11 3RQ

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2008
Inspection number	314187

Telephone number

01327 265900

Fax number

01327 265901

Age group 3–11

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger than average primary school. A new headteacher was appointed in September 2008. The school has received a number of national awards, including the Eco School award and the Football Association Charter Standard. The school provides Early Years Foundation Stage provision (EYFS) through Nursery and Reception classes. The governing body manages a Children's Centre that offers a wide range of activities and services for parents and toddlers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodford Halse is a satisfactory school. Following a period of instability in leadership and a decline in standards, the new headteacher has brought about rapid improvements. He provides good leadership and has inspired the staff. They work together as a cohesive team and share his aspirations for excellence. He quickly and accurately identified weaknesses in the quality of teaching and, with good support from the local authority, provided in-service training that has already led to improvements. Teaching is now satisfactory overall and some of it is good. Teachers generally have a good subject knowledge and provide clear explanations. In some lessons, teachers give pupils work that is not well enough matched to their prior learning and this slows their progress. Some lessons do not move at a sufficiently brisk pace, which also slows their progress.

Children generally enter the Nursery with skills that are a little below those expected for their age. They make good progress in the EYFS because the teaching is good, and most reach the early learning goals expected of them, except in writing, by the time they enter Year 1. Due to improvements in teaching, pupils now make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6, reaching broadly average standards in Year 2 and Year 6, except in writing in Year 6, which is below average. This is because teachers give pupils insufficient opportunities to carry out extended pieces of writing and to practise their writing skills in other subjects. Also, handwriting is not taught consistently well in all classes. The curriculum is satisfactory and is enriched by a range of visits and visitors. For example, links with the local country park make a good contribution to pupils' progress in science.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory and safeguarding procedures meet the current requirements. There are good links with outside agencies that teachers use well to promote pupils' personal development and well-being, which is good. Behaviour is exemplary. Academic guidance is satisfactory. There have been significant improvements to the way teachers mark pupils' work since September. Marking now gives pupils a clear understanding of how well they have done and what they need to improve. There are new procedures for setting pupils targets for improvement in reading, writing and mathematics and pupils know what their targets are. However, teachers are not sufficiently directing their teaching towards pupils' specific targets so they do not always know how to meet them.

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders are all now involved in monitoring and evaluating the school's work. This is beginning to have an impact on pupils' achievement in mathematics because the subject leader identifies pupils at risk of underachievement and ensures that appropriate booster teaching is given. The large majority of parents are supportive of the school and appreciate the recent improvements, notably that they are now told precisely how well their children are doing. One parent summed up the views of many, writing: 'The new parents' evening format gave parents more information about their child's progress compared against national expectations. This was useful.' Recent improvements in teaching, achievement, monitoring and evaluation procedures, marking and target setting confirm that the school is satisfactorily placed to continue to improve.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Children's Centre provides many effective opportunities for parents to work, learn and play alongside their children from birth to the time they enter the Nursery at the age of three, and beyond. This makes a significant contribution to children's smooth induction into the Nursery class. Most children settle happily and quickly become familiar with school routines. Children are well cared for and there are good relationships so their personal development and well-being are good. Staff plan exciting activities that cover all areas of learning. They make careful observations and assessments of how well children are doing and plan future activities based on their assessments. As a result, they achieve well, except in the development of their writing skills where achievement is no more than satisfactory. There is a good balance between adult led and child initiated activities. For example, around the theme of Divali, some children made garlands and sweets under the direction of adults while others engaged in a child initiated activity, designing ancient maps. The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The provision is continuously monitored and evaluated and improvements made where necessary. This has resulted in the teaching being good and the Nursery and Reception provision being a strength of the school. Excellent use is now made of the outside areas, which enhances progress in all areas of learning. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Developing part of the school's extensive grounds as a forest school site has had a positive impact on children's knowledge and understanding of the world.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement by ensuring that teaching is consistently good, particularly by making sure that work is always well matched to pupils' prior attainment and that all lessons move at a brisk pace.
- Raise achievement in writing by providing more opportunities to do extended pieces of writing in English and in other subjects and by improving the teaching of handwriting.
- Increase the effectiveness of academic guidance by ensuring that pupils know how to achieve their individualised targets for improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

After a good start in the EYFS, most children enter Year 1 having achieved the goals expected of them in most areas of learning. Progress slows in Years 1 to 6, where it is no more than satisfactory. Results of national assessments at the end of Year 2 are broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 6 had been declining but initial results for 2008, and the school's own tracking, indicate that they are now rising and are broadly average, except in writing which is below average. Analysis of pupils' work confirms the improving picture. Most pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including speech, language and communication difficulties, make good progress because provision for them is well managed. Their needs are identified early and are met well through targeted support from a team of talented learning support assistants.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. There is a good range of sporting activities which help them to do so, including links with Woodford United. Regular summer use of the school swimming pool means that most pupils can swim at least 25 metres before they leave the school. Pupils feel safe. One summed up the views of most in saying, 'It feels as if we are all sealed in.' There are good relationships throughout the school and most pupils are happy to approach an adult if they have any concerns. Behaviour is excellent because teachers and other staff manage it extremely well. A small number of parents raised concerns about bullying but these are not generally shared by the pupils. When asked about it, a typical comment was, 'I was bullied a bit but my teacher sorted it out and we are good friends now.' Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good; their cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils have a good understanding of their place in the school and local community. However, their understanding of Britain as a diverse society is less well developed. Pupils make a good contribution to the school and local communities. Eco warriors play a valuable part in encouraging and monitoring recycling and over £1,000 is raised annually for national charities. Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being, as demonstrated by their satisfactory achievement in literacy and numeracy skills. Levels of attendance are broadly average but too many families take holidays during term time.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching is characterised by good relationships between teachers and pupils. As a result, pupils thoroughly enjoy coming to school. Learning objectives for each lesson are made clear so pupils know what they should have learned by the end of the lesson. Teachers are increasingly giving pupils opportunities to assess for themselves how well they have achieved but this practice is recent and has not yet had time to raise achievement. Teachers make regular assessments of pupils' learning and mark their work conscientiously. However, the information gained is not always used to plan future work that is well matched to pupils' prior learning and this slows their progress. Pupils frequently spend too long sitting on the carpet before getting on with their work, which restricts the amount of work done in the lesson.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is broad and balanced and covers all statutory requirements. The curriculum for physical education makes an important contribution to pupils' healthy lifestyles. Regular visits from the community police support officer make a good contribution to pupils' social and moral development. There have been recent improvements to curriculum planning but these have not yet made an impact on raising achievement. This is because teachers do not always plan lessons that sufficiently meet the wide range of abilities in each class. Standards in writing are not as good as they should be because there are too few opportunities to write in subjects other than English and to do long pieces of writing. Insufficient importance is given to teaching handwriting which means it is not taught consistently well across the school.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

All staff contribute to the school's calm, purposeful, supportive ethos, which results in pupils' good personal development and well-being. Staff provide good support to pupils with learning and emotional difficulties, enabling them to take a full part in the life of the school. Targets for improvement are identified accurately and pupils have a clear understanding of what they are but they are not given sufficient guidance on how to reach them and this reduces their achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Monitoring and evaluation procedures are now effective and have led to actions that have halted the decline in standards in Year 6. The school recognises that there is more to be done and all staff are committed to achieving the targets set in the raising achievement plan. The school makes a satisfactory contribution towards achieving community cohesion but insufficient attention is given to pupils' understanding of the global community. Governors are now given accurate and detailed information about pupils' achievement and are beginning to hold the school to account for this. Plans are in place for them to visit school more often and to have closer links with senior leaders but it is too soon for these procedures to have had an impact on raising achievement further.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 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

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	3

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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**

14 November 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodford Halse CE School, NN11 3RQ

You may remember that I visited your school a little while ago with two other inspectors. Thank you very much for telling us all about your school and for making us feel so welcome. I am writing now to tell you what we found.

Yours is a satisfactory school that is getting better because your headteacher and teachers are determined that you should all do as well as you can. The staff look after you well so most of you like coming to school. One of the things that pleased us most was your excellent behaviour.

You get off to a good start when you come into the Nursery and Reception classes. You make satisfactory progress as you move through the school and reach standards that are similar to those of other eleven year olds by the time you move on to your secondary schools, but your writing isn't quite as good. Your teachers mark your work very clearly and most of you know what your targets are.

There are three things that we have asked your teachers to do to help you to reach even higher standards:

- make sure that your work is not too hard or too easy in any of your lessons and that you get on with your work quickly without spending too much time sitting on the carpet
- help you to do better in writing by: expecting you to do more writing in lots of subjects, like geography and history; setting you more long pieces of writing; helping you more with your handwriting
- make sure that they teach you exactly how to reach your targets.

You can help your teachers a lot by continuing to behave well and work hard.

I wish you all the very best for the future.

Yours faithfully

David Mankelow

Lead inspector