

# Woodcroft First School

## Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 124152             |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Staffordshire      |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 314822             |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 17–18 January 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Terry Elston       |

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

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|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | First                                |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Community                            |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 4–9                                  |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed                                |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |                                      |
| School                                    | 205                                  |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body                   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Ann Knobbs                           |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Ruth Cartlidge                       |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 2 June 2003                          |
| <b>School address</b>                     | Wallbridge Drive<br>Leek<br>ST13 8JG |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01538 483186                         |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01538 483189                         |

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|--------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 4–9                |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 17–18 January 2008 |
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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is a school of average size that admits pupils mainly from White British backgrounds. While most come from the nearby private housing estate, a significant number travel from Leek and the surrounding area. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is lower than average. Children now enter the school aged four years following the closure of its Early Years class. Private providers run a before and after school club and playgroup on the school's site. Children's attainment on entry is broadly typical of those in most schools, although an increasing number have weak language and social skills.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils love learning and are justifiably proud of their achievements. Parents are unanimous that it cares for their children well. They speak highly of the good care, support and guidance provided, and comments such as 'wonderful atmosphere' and 'a really happy school' are typical. The staff treat all pupils as individuals so that they feel confident and valued. Relationships throughout the school are very good and acts of bullying are rare. In class and around the school, pupils behave well because that is what is expected of them. From the time they enter the Reception, they develop their personal skills very well, think deeply about people less fortunate than themselves and leave Year 4 as mature individuals, well prepared for the future. These important strengths and the consistently good teaching mean that pupils achieve well and make good progress. Standards at the end of Year 2 and Year 4 are above average in reading, mathematics and science. Standards in writing are average and the school recognises that some pupils, particularly the more able, could do better. They enjoy their lessons and speak highly of the way their teachers always show patience and help them when they are stuck. They particularly like it when teachers use the interactive whiteboards to illustrate their lessons. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and know when they need extra support to achieve better. They mark pupils' work promptly, but sometimes miss opportunities to show them how to improve. Pupils say how much they enjoy the interesting curriculum and, as one put it, 'the brilliant clubs at lunchtime and after school'. The very well planned personal, social and health education curriculum results in pupils gaining an outstanding understanding of how to live healthy lives. The school has started to provide more opportunities for pupils to write in all subjects in order to raise standards, but there are still too many occasions when they just have to fill in a word or two on worksheets to complete the task. Pupils feel secure at school and know who to turn to if they have worries. Systems for safeguarding them are rigorous and reviewed regularly. Those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from good support and guidance and make good progress as a result. A major reason for the success of the school is the effective leadership and management by the headteacher and senior staff. Together, they have created a strong sense of teamwork in which staff support each other very well. The headteacher provides clear direction gained from a thorough understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This explains why the school has made good progress since the last inspection and why it is well placed to improve further. The governing body supports the school well and is closely involved in setting future priorities.

## Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

### Grade: 2

The school makes good provision for children in the Foundation Stage. The good leadership and management mean that the provision runs smoothly with a sharp focus on children achieving well and enjoying school. The strong home-school links ensure that children make a smooth transition to school. The detailed assessments provide accurate measures of their strengths and weaknesses and teachers use them effectively to plan activities at the right level. The curriculum is planned well to ensure children have a good balance of work to improve their academic skills, learn to take care of themselves and develop their independence. Adults work very well as a team to provide very good care, support and guidance to ensure children's safety and well-being. The teaching and learning are consistently good. Lessons are a good balance between whole-class sessions where all children learn new skills and group work to develop their understanding further. As a result, children make good progress. By the end of the

Reception Year, their attainment is broadly typical of children of their age, although their knowledge of the world and creative development are better than in most schools.

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

- Have higher expectations of pupils' writing in all subjects.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils make good progress and achieve well in nearly all subjects. However, while nearly all pupils attain the national standard in writing, few move on to the higher levels. In contrast, a significant proportion of pupils attain high standards in mathematics and other aspects of English where teachers provide more opportunities to develop their skills to the full. By the time they leave at Year 4, standards are above average in reading, mathematics and science, but standards in writing continue to lag behind other subjects. In the past, boys' standards have been significantly lower than those of girls, but the gap is narrowing as teachers have introduced more practical activities to inspire boys to learn. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well. They benefit from good support in class and when withdrawn for small group work, and their reading skills in particular improve well.

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

### **Grade: 2**

Pupils love coming to school and this is reflected in their excellent attendance. They talk very enthusiastically about all the 'interesting, fun things' that the school provides, particularly the practical activities. Pupils have good attitudes to their learning, are keen to do well and nearly always behave well. They reflect deeply on issues such as the need to accept views that are different to their own, and have a good knowledge of the richness of other cultures. They look after one another, and older pupils are particularly helpful in helping Reception children settle into school routines. The Eco committee is justifiably proud of its achievements in helping pupils develop a good awareness of how to be good citizens and care for their environment. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the need to live healthily. They enjoy the healthy choices available at snack time and lunchtimes and take part in the excellent range of physical activities on offer. Pupils have a good involvement in the wider community through performances and musical events and raising funds for charity. Annual events such as the 'Cream Tea' enable pupils to develop good life skills as they plan and prepare treats for their families, friends and local residents. They generally know how well they are doing at school, but their knowledge of their targets for further improvement is sometimes hazy.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teachers are very good at making their lessons interesting so that pupils enjoy learning. They make introductory activities snappy so that pupils maintain their concentration well. Their competent use of interactive whiteboards enables them to move smoothly from one task to another and maintain a good pace of learning. Pupils benefit from lots of opportunities to use

their language, which explains why so many speak confidently, even to large groups. This was illustrated very well in the excellent Christmas play when even the youngest children spoke so clearly that the whole audience could hear them. Teachers plan carefully to ensure that pupils of all abilities learn equally well and have the chance to contribute at their own level. Skilled teaching assistants work effectively with pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who make good progress, both in lessons and when taught in small groups outside the classroom. The school has good assessment systems that show teachers clearly how well pupils are attaining. Teachers' marking does not always inform pupils clearly about what they need to do to improve. This means that some pupils keep making the same mistakes, particularly in their writing. For example, one pupil mistakenly put apostrophes in words such as "hexagon's" and "circle's" in a mathematics task and, because it was not corrected, continued to do so throughout the book.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 2**

The school's well-planned curriculum meets the needs of all its pupils. Recent initiatives to link subjects together are beginning to make learning more relevant and exciting for the pupils. The planning provides good opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication technology skills in all subjects, and this is much improved since the last inspection. The school has focused recently on providing more opportunities for pupils to write in all subjects, but in some classes the over reliance on undemanding worksheets limits the development of their writing skills. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good and explains why pupils have such a good awareness of how to keep safe, fit and healthy. Pupils talk enthusiastically about the good range of after school activities, clubs, visits and visitors that enrich the curriculum and add to their enjoyment of learning.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Parents speak highly of the way the school cares for pupils and keeps them safe. Systems for safeguarding pupils are robust and reviewed regularly. The very good relationships ensure that pupils feel valued and have the confidence to talk over their worries with staff. The school deals with rare instances of bullying quickly and effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants provide good support and guidance to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who grow in confidence, are fully included in all activities and achieve well. Teachers track pupils' progress carefully and set them challenging but achievable targets. However, they do not refer to these targets sufficiently in lessons so pupils sometimes forget them.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

The headteacher's high expectations of pupils, staff and herself encourage all members of the school to strive hard to succeed. She is not afraid to take on initiatives that will improve the school and is keen to support staff who need training to learn new skills. The headteacher is supported well by senior staff who share her vision and work well as a team. Subject leaders do some evaluations of the quality of teaching and learning, but the school recognises that they need to do more to make the best of their expertise. The school has good self-evaluation systems based on detailed assessments of pupils' progress that give the leaders the right priorities to improve the school. For example, following a detailed analysis of standards in

mathematics, the teachers provided more opportunities for pupils to solve problems, and standards were raised significantly as a result. The same process is now happening with writing, and there is evidence that pupils' work is already starting to improve. There are good partnerships with other schools in the area that do much to enhance provision in sport and the arts. Governors are critical, supportive and have a thorough grasp of what needs to be done to raise standards. They play a big part in appointing staff of consistently good quality that add to the school's effectiveness.

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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 |
|---|----------------|

### 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 <sup>1</sup> 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   | 1 |
| The attendance of learners  | 1 |
| 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?   | 2 |

<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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 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  |

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

- 21 January 2008 Dear Pupils Inspection of Woodcroft First School, Leek, ST13 8JG Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We both really enjoyed seeing you working so hard in lessons and having such fun in the playground, even in the pouring rain. We loved watching your brilliant performance in the Christmas play. Those who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your good school. What we liked most about your school.
  - You work very hard and make such good progress that your work is of a better standard than in most schools.
  - Your behaviour is really good, both in class and out in the playground.
  - You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives, eat the right foods and take regular exercise.
  - Your headteacher and other leaders run the school well and know how to improve things.
  - Your teachers do a good job. They work very hard to make your lessons fun and help you learn quickly.
  - You thoroughly enjoy the interesting activities provided and the many exciting clubs after school.
  - All staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe. What we would like the school to do now.
  - Help you to improve the quality of your writing, not just in English but in all subjects. You can help, by making sure your writing is the best you can do.
  - Make sure that, when your teachers mark your books, they show you how to do even better.
- Yours sincerely Terry Elston Lead inspector

21 January 2008

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Woodcroft First School, Leek, ST13 8JG**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave us when we visited your school. We both really enjoyed seeing you working so hard in lessons and having such fun in the playground, even in the pouring rain. We loved watching your brilliant performance in the Christmas play. Those who were kind enough to speak to us told us a lot about your good school.

**What we liked most about your school.**

- You work very hard and make such good progress that your work is of a better standard than in most schools.
- Your behaviour is really good, both in class and out in the playground.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to live healthy lives, eat the right foods and take regular exercise.
- Your headteacher and other leaders run the school well and know how to improve things.
- Your teachers do a good job. They work very hard to make your lessons fun and help you learn quickly.
- You thoroughly enjoy the interesting activities provided and the many exciting clubs after school.
- All staff at the school take good care of you and keep you safe.

**What we would like the school to do now.**

- Help you to improve the quality of your writing, not just in English but in all subjects. You can help, by making sure your writing is the best you can do.
- Make sure that, when your teachers mark your books, they show you how to do even better.

Yours sincerely

Terry Elston  
Lead inspector