

The Winchcombe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135079
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	316308
Inspection dates	6–7 February 2008
Reporting inspector	Peter Thrussell

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	289
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sheila Burch
Headteacher	Mrs Susan Varley
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2007
School address	Maple Crescent Shaw Newbury RG14 1LN
Telephone number	01635 232780
Fax number	01635 232789

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Winchcombe School is a larger than average primary school. It was opened in 2005, following the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. Since that time there has been a high turnover of staff, some at senior levels. The school currently has a seconded, acting deputy headteacher. There is specialist provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties, who are on the school roll, and therefore the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The school was inspected a year ago and was given a Notice to Improve, as significant improvement was required in relation to inconsistencies in teaching, in order to raise pupils' standards and achievements.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

Children start in the Foundation Stage with standards below those expected for their age and they make good progress. Throughout the rest of the school, pupils make insufficient and inconsistent progress. This is because the overall quality of teaching and learning is not high enough. Since the last inspection, in spite of some staff changes, leadership and management have not been able to demonstrate sustained improvements, either to pupils' achievements or to the quality of teaching and learning. The school's capacity for further improvement is, therefore, inadequate.

Standards are extremely low at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. Progress is inadequate across Key Stage 2 and the 2007 results were a decline on the previous year. More recent local authority consultancy support for literacy and numeracy, with a renewed emphasis on the national intensifying support programme, is bringing about some improvement in achievement, but this is not consistent across the school. Where there have been successful interventions, such as the 'Catch Up' programme for reading, progress is being accelerated. Very good specialist provision for pupils with speech and language needs enables these pupils to make good progress in developing these vital skills.

One of the key reasons for this low achievement has been the lack of availability to staff of easily accessible data on achievement and standards. The seconded deputy headteacher has successfully taken this in hand, and teachers now have clear information on the levels their pupils are working at and the progress they are expected to make over the year. Furthermore, teachers are now more accountable for the progress pupils make as part of their performance management. Nevertheless, teachers are not yet using this information well enough to plan activities that are appropriate to the needs of all pupils, so that they can make the best progress possible. Consequently, gaps remain in pupils' learning, which further hinder their progress. The data on standards and achievement are enabling subject leaders for English and mathematics to identify more precisely areas that are in need of rapid improvement. However, they are new to the posts and have not yet had time to develop the skills to carry out their roles effectively.

The school promotes a satisfactory level of personal development and well-being. Pupils have a good understanding of healthy lifestyles. They are keen to eat the right food and to stay fit. Good coaching links with local sporting clubs effectively contribute to this. Parents express concerns over behaviour, but pupils confirm that any misbehaviour is dealt with effectively. Behaviour in lessons is generally well-managed but, occasionally, restlessness and inattention result from lessons where pupils are not sufficiently involved or challenged in their learning. Parents also express significant concerns regarding leadership and management, despite the school's best efforts to seek parents' views and listen to their concerns.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start in the Foundation Stage. Because of the close links between Foundation 1 and 2, children's learning and personal development proceed smoothly.

Consequently, many children make good progress and are working securely in almost all the areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. The Foundation Stage leader has focused successfully on improving strategies to ensure that any children who are underachieving are quickly identified and helped. This is beginning to have an impact by speeding up the children's progress in the weaker areas of learning, such as reading and writing. There is a strong emphasis on personal development. As a result, the children are happy and develop a growing confidence to choose what they want to do. Although indoor and outdoor areas are used well to provide activities to develop children's independence and co-operative play, the building itself and many of the resources are tired looking. Staff have good relationships with parents and carers. One parent commented, 'I am happy and confident that my son is being cared for in the manner that I would expect.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise achievement and standards in English and mathematics and science.
- Improve the use of assessment information to plan appropriate and challenging work for all pupils.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels, especially in relation to monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Achievement and standards are inadequate. The 2007 assessments at the end of Year 2 showed standards to be extremely low in reading, writing and mathematics. At the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics and science were extremely low, reflecting inadequate progress across Key Stage 2, and showing a decline in the previous year's results. At both key stages, too few pupils attained at higher than the expected levels. Indications from the latest assessments show that, in 2008, the school is unlikely to meet its statutory targets at the end of Year 6.

The improved use of assessment information and consultancy support have enabled the school to pin point underachievement and to begin to organise additional support to help pupils make up lost ground in their learning. In Years 1 to 3, for example, a systematic approach to teaching phonics is aimed to help pupils with their reading and spelling. The school has identified the need to develop mathematical vocabulary and to provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. These initiatives are still fairly recent and have yet to show a significant impact on achievement and standards across the school. Pupils with special needs in speech and language make good progress because of the high quality provision for them.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Most pupils enjoy coming to school and this is shown in their improved attendance, which is now broadly average. They show a suitable understanding of how to stay safe and know who to approach for help. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Through carefully planned assemblies and celebrations of different events, pupils show a sound understanding of their own culture and are learning to respect others. Pupils increasingly contribute to the work of the school. The school council is effective and has made useful suggestions, such as the provision of friendship benches in the playground. Pupils make a positive contribution to the community through fundraising activities and their involvement

with specific projects, such as taking part in the Newbury Carnival. Their future learning is hindered by their low achievement in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 4

The quality of teaching and learning is inadequate. The pace of learning is often too slow and pupils easily lose concentration. Pupils spend too long settling down to work. Activities are not always explained well enough so that pupils are not sure what they have to do and cannot get on by themselves. Expectations are not high enough, for both the quantity and quality of work produced. Where teaching is better, lessons are well prepared, questioning is brisk and pupils respond positively to interesting activities. Pupils with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities often make better progress because their needs are identified well and work is planned appropriately. The needs of pupils in the speech and language unit are met very well. Very good specialist teaching plays an important part in helping them to make good progress in relation to their specific needs. There are some examples of good marking with teachers making useful comments on how pupils can improve their work, but this is inconsistent. Teachers summarise learning at the end of lessons, but do not give sufficient time for pupils themselves to discuss and evaluate what they have learned.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. Curriculum planning of necessity is focused on literacy and numeracy. The school has revised planning to give better links between different subjects, so that there are more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills. The use of information and communication technology to support learning is developing well. The school provides a good range of clubs which children rate highly. Provision for physical education and music is good and is enhanced by specialist teaching, or coaching from local sports clubs. Pupils have opportunities to participate in sporting and musical events out of school. Displays reflect many subjects but their quality does not sufficiently enhance the learning environment, or motivate children to produce their best work and take pride in their achievements.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

The school has strengthened its commitment to care for and support pupils, including those who are vulnerable and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The support for pupils in the speech and language unit has a positive effect on their capacity to learn and their self-confidence. Child protection and health and safety procedures are clear and understood by staff. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately. Consequently, arrangements for keeping pupils safe are secure. Teachers and other adults have a good understanding of their pupils' pastoral needs and so are able to respond positively to any concerns. In addition, the school now has a dedicated pastoral manager to support pupils and families. However, academic support is limited in its impact. Much of the school's work on assessment is too new for its impact to be clearly measured. The use of individual and group targets for literacy and numeracy is inconsistent and, along with marking, is not yet having a sufficient impact on raising achievement.

Leadership and management

Grade: 4

Overall, leadership and management are inadequate. The headteacher is well supported by the seconded deputy and assistant headteacher, who have improved the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage and the systems for monitoring and recording achievement and standards. The school's self-evaluation is reasonably accurate and links appropriately with the actions set out in the school development plan. However, there is too little evaluation of the impact of past efforts to secure improvement, and the ways in which the school intends to measure the success of future actions are not specific enough. Monitoring has yet to fully involve all senior leaders. Particularly weak teaching has been identified, but the steps taken to eliminate this through further support and professional development have not been fully effective. Governors have a sufficient understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Until recently, they have not had the full range of data on achievement and standards to challenge the school adequately on its underperformance.

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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?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	4

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
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?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The attendance of learners	3
The behaviour of learners	3
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	4

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	4
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

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?	4
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	4
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	4
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	4
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
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?	Yes
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

14 March 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Winchcombe School, Newbury, RG14 1LN

Thank you for welcoming us to your school and telling us about your work.

We liked these things the most.

- You get a good start to school in the Foundation Stage.
- Children who find learning difficult and those of you who attend the speech and language classes are very well supported.
- You value the opportunities that you have to improve the school. Friendship benches are a really good idea.
- You know all about healthy diets and keeping fit.
- You have many opportunities to take part in different sports.
- The school helps you to sort out any personal concerns or difficulties that you may have.

Although there are some successful aspects to the school, overall it is not doing well enough and needs to improve quickly.

We have asked the school to work on these things.

- Standards are not high enough in English, mathematics and science. You must all work hard to raise them.
- We have asked the school to ensure that the work you are given to do is just right for each one of you, neither too easy nor too difficult. You must all rise to the challenge!
- The people who run your school need to make sure that it quickly gets better. They must check that all of your lessons help you to learn to the best of your ability.

Thank you again

Yours sincerely

Peter Thrussell

Lead Inspector