

Watling Street Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104202
Local Authority	Walsall
Inspection number	323986
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Roger Sadler

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	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	207
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	Nick Baddeley
Headteacher	Lesley Powell
Date of previous school inspection	6 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Watling Street Brownhills Walsall WS8 7LW
Telephone number	01543 452320
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This school is located in an area of some economic disadvantage, and an above average proportion of pupils are entitled to free school meals. A lower percentage of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities than the national average. The majority of these needs are social and communication difficulties. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language. Children enter the Nursery class of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the September of the school year in which they are four. A breakfast and after school club for pupils, which is not managed by the governing body, takes place in the school daily.

The school has recently received an Artsmark, an Activemark for physical education and sport, the Basic Skills Quality Mark, a Healthy Schools Award, the Inclusive Schools Award and the Eco-Schools Award.

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. Since its last inspection, staff have continued to build on the excellent practice identified then. All leaders ensure that pupils' achievement and their personal development and well-being are outstanding. Teaching and learning, care, guidance and support, and the school's curriculum are also outstanding. Teaching is good in Nursery and Reception, although in Nursery, children are occasionally left without adult guidance too long when working on chosen activities. From Years 2 to 6, where pupils of all abilities make excellent progress, teaching is consistently outstanding. In Year 1, planning is not always sufficiently modified to meet the needs of all learners and this sometimes slows progress. An impressive feature throughout the school is the way that the school accurately identifies, at an early stage, individual learning difficulties and provides regular and carefully tailored additional support. This enables pupils who find learning difficult to achieve their best. Similarly, outstanding challenge is provided for those pupils who are more able. Teaching assistants make an especially strong contribution to pupils' excellent literacy development when they teach them in small groups three or more times a week. Pupils are proud of their school and parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. One parent reflected the views of many when she wrote, 'My children love coming to school. The quality of teaching is excellent and the staff are always prepared to go the extra mile.'

Standards attained by Year 6 pupils have been significantly above average for the last five years. National test results in 2008 again indicated that a large proportion of Year 6 pupils attained above the levels expected of their ages. Pupils enjoy school a great deal and make excellent progress in their personal development. They are friendly, confident and polite. Pupils take advantage of the many opportunities planned to help them understand how to lead healthy lives. Safety, including internet safety, is given strong priority and pupils behave with excellent regard for their own well-being and that of others. The school has excellent strategies to ensure it makes an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. The school itself is an extremely cohesive community where relationships and behaviour are excellent. Many, especially older pupils, take on extensive responsibilities for helping others or the smooth running of the school. Extensive local and national charity work helps pupils contribute strongly to the local community. The school's outstanding curriculum, with its increasingly strong emphasis on helping pupils understand and develop empathy with other cultures, both in Britain and abroad, further supports pupils' personal development and promotes community cohesion.

Outstanding leadership and management underpin the school's continual improvement and high standards. The headteacher carefully monitors the progress of each pupil and checks with every teacher that everything is in place to help them do their best. Training and guidance for all staff is excellent. Staff training is followed up with regular checks in classrooms and staff are given further guidance where necessary. This results in staff adopting a consistently effective approach to key aspects of teaching, such as how pupils' work is marked or how targets are set. The school has strong partnerships and extensive links with other schools, care agencies and teacher and teaching assistant training providers. These enrich the quality of provision and support pupils' personal development very well indeed.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The majority of children enter with knowledge and skills lower than is typically found. The provision in the EYFS is good. Parents are pleased with the effective induction arrangements. Staff are skilled in providing a calm and safe environment and excellent attention is given to children's health, safety and welfare. Staff promote strongly children's personal and emotional development and are skilled in managing and modelling good behaviour and encouraging children to be independent. For example, children are soon able to put on and fasten their own coats and are even able to settle minor squabbles with only minimal adult support. As a result, children settle quickly, they get on together very well and thoroughly enjoy coming to school.

Teachers plan learning well so that all children are included and engaged and experience a good range of activities. There is a good balance between those activities led by adults and those that children choose for themselves. However, when children are working on a chosen activity independently, they are sometimes left for too long without adult intervention and so this slows their learning a little. Continual careful observations and thorough assessments of each child's progress are extremely effective. These are used to identify the next steps of learning and contribute well to the good progress children make throughout the EYFS. By the end of Reception, in all areas of learning, many children attain the standards expected of their ages but a few remain a little below these. The department is well led and managed. Staff have a very good overview of the strengths and weaknesses, including the restrictions of the accommodation in being able to add imaginative stimuli to the classrooms and also to access the outdoor area fully. The school has an appropriate plan to address these issues.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that children are not left too long without adult intervention in Nursery.
- Improve the quality of planning and teaching in Year 1 so that the needs of all learners are fully met.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve their best. Higher attaining pupils and those who find learning difficult make outstanding progress because of the high quality additional challenge or support they are provided with. Pupils' performance in national tests at Year 6, school records and pupils' work indicate that pupils attain above average standards by the end of Year 6. Standards in science are particularly high and almost all pupils exceed the nationally expected standard for their ages. From Years 2 to 6, due to high quality teaching and strong academic guidance, pupils make excellent progress. In Year 1, progress is a little slower because planning and teaching are sometimes less effectively modified to match the full range of learning needs in the class. The school recognised that boys were making slower progress in English than girls and brought about many improvements in the curriculum to better meet boys' needs and interests. As a result, boys' achievement is now as good as the girls'.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils are extremely friendly, kind and polite to each other and have excellent relationships with adults in school. Pupils' love of school and very positive attitudes enable them to make

rapid progress in their learning. Pupils have a good understanding of how to ensure a healthy lifestyle, although many pupils bring snacks which are not entirely healthy to eat at playtimes. Spiritual, moral and social development is outstanding. Pupils have a strong sense of what is right and wrong. They respond very positively to the many opportunities that are provided to reflect on issues, for example through extensive work on recycling and other ecological issues. The school is developing excellent links with a school in Walsall and this is helping pupils learn at first hand about the ways of life of other cultures in modern Britain. The school council provides pupils with a strong voice in the running of the school and the chance to influence and improve the provision. Pupils' outstanding personal development and excellent basic skills mean they are fully prepared for their next school and life beyond.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

Teaching and learning are mainly outstanding in Years 2 to 6 and mostly good in other classes. Teachers continually communicate high expectations and remind pupils of the need to do their best. Younger pupils receive frequent additional teaching in small groups from teaching assistants to help them with their reading and writing skills and these help pupils make excellent progress. Staff manage pupils extremely well and promote positive self-esteem and excellent attitudes to learning so that pupils are confident and enjoy lessons a great deal. Pupils are provided with many opportunities to assess their own and others' work against checklists or criteria they are given. This helps pupils understand exactly where they need to concentrate their efforts to improve and to be closely involved in their own learning and progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The school's outstanding curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' excellent personal development and achievement. Pupils' confidence in basic skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology provide strong support for learning in many subjects. Following analysis of pupils' views about their attitudes towards history and geography, the school recognised that these subjects could be taught in a more interesting fashion. In response, the school introduced the International Primary Curriculum. Pupils are particularly inspired by this development, especially its greater emphasis on independent research and learning about interesting contemporary issues, such as ecology and moral dilemmas. Pupils and their parents very much appreciate the extensive range of clubs and additional opportunities for learning, for example all pupils in Year 5 have weekly instrumental teaching sessions. The weekly Year 6 English and mathematics booster club is fully attended and provides additional support to pupils' high standards.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Academic guidance is outstanding. High quality marking and continuous assessment and feedback on work are important factors in pupils' outstanding achievement because they help them to understand how they can improve their performance. Many, especially older pupils, know the level at which they are working and also know exactly where they need to concentrate in order to move to the next level in their writing and mathematics. The school has excellent

systems to assess and monitor the progress of each individual and uses this information very well to direct additional support where it is needed. Pastoral care is also excellent. Procedures for child protection and safeguarding fully meet current requirements. Governors make an important contribution to pupils' safety. Recently, for example, they have carried out very thorough risk assessments of fire hazard and ensured that displays are sprayed to reduce the speed at which any fire would spread. Arrangements for ensuring good attendance are very effective and result in consistently high levels of attendance throughout the school.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The headteacher provides the key inspiration for the overall success of the school. Not only does she personally provide outstanding leadership and management but she is also able to develop high standards of leadership in others. Consequently, governors, subject leaders and other senior managers carry out their roles to a very high standard. Since the previous very successful inspection, the school has brought about some important improvements, for example in the curriculum and in pupils' knowledge of their own learning and in pupils' personal study skills. The school has a strong track record of improvement and has an extremely clear and accurate grasp of how well it is doing and where further improvements might be made. This means that the school has outstanding capacity to maintain its high standards and to bring about further improvements in the future.

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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?	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?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ 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

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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	1
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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
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?	1
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**

21 January 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watling Street Primary School, Walsall, WS8 7LW

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to inspect your school. We send special thanks to those of you who gave up part of your lunchtime to talk with us. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and your teachers and watching you learn.

We agree with you and your parents that Watling Street Primary is an excellent school. It is extremely well run, giving you an outstanding education and an excellent preparation for life in your next school and in the wider community. Adults provide great teaching so that you make such strong progress. I am pleased yours is such a happy school and that you and your parents are so pleased with it. I can understand why you are so positive about your new International Primary Curriculum work and the extensive range of clubs and activities provided.

You thoroughly enjoy school and you attend very regularly. You all clearly have an excellent understanding of how to act safely. You understand what is right and what is wrong, show great consideration for others and are very friendly to each other. You should be proud of your good behaviour and excellent manners. Those of you who find learning difficult make excellent progress because the school helps you learn.

There are many things that your headteacher, the staff and the governors want to improve because they want your school to get even better! We agree with them that some of you in Year 1 could make better progress sometimes if the work you did was at the right level for all of you. We also think that children in the Nursery would do better if adults worked with them more during chosen activities.

I send you our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Roger Sadler

Lead inspector