

# Widmer End Combined School

## Inspection report

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Unique Reference Number	110335
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	325134
Inspection dates	24–25 June 2009
Reporting inspector	Nicola Davies

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 under pilot arrangements; it was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

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Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Lynn King
Headteacher	Miss Helen Perry
Date of previous school inspection	27 June 2006
School address	Estcourt Drive Widmer End High Wycombe HP15 6AH
Telephone number	01494 714 371
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## Introduction

This pilot inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors. The inspectors visited 16 lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and sampled the work of pupils. They looked at documentation including: the school development plan; the tracking of pupils' progress; programmes for a number of pupils who are experiencing difficulties; plans for promoting community cohesion and over 100 parental questionnaires.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the personal and academic outcomes for pupils, particularly those who may be more vulnerable
- the teaching and learning of writing, particularly for more-able pupils in Key Stage 2
- the teaching and learning of communication and personal skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- the impact of the leadership and management team in improving the school.

## Information about the school

This is a one-form entry primary school just outside High Wycombe. The school draws its pupils from a number of surrounding areas. It includes a Reception Class which makes up its Early Years Foundation Stage. Nearly all pupils are of White British heritage. A small but growing number of pupils are learning English as an additional language and are at early stages in this when they join the school. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with national average. These mostly relate to behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.

An independently run pre-school operates from the school site.

## Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

2

## Main findings

Widmer End Combined is a good school which knows each of its pupils very well, so that individual strengths are celebrated and needs recognised. This focus on individuals is at the heart of the school's continuing success. It is highly evident in the very strong pastoral work undertaken with pupils and underpinned by the enduring relationships developed between pupils, staff and parents. By the end of their time at school, pupils of all different abilities and backgrounds have enjoyed a host of responsibilities, forged good relationships with adults and peers, and have been involved in, often innovative projects which are designed to build on their strengths and address their particular academic, personal, social and emotional needs. Attendance is high, academic standards are above average and most pupils do well.

A recent focus of the school's work has been to enhance pupils' writing, and in particular to ensure that more pupils are working at higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6. The school's very careful tracking of pupils' progress indicates that although nearly all pupils make expected or better progress in the subject by the end of their time in the school, the progress they make each year is more variable and weaker overall than their often very good progress in reading. Initiatives have included giving pupils more opportunity and inspiration for their writing through a focus on drama, role play and writing linked to different subjects or themes. This worked well in a number of lessons observed where more-able pupils were well stretched. However, the focus on writing is still 'work in progress' as teachers do not consistently adapt their lessons as well as they could to meet the specific needs of their classes. This is particularly so where classes contain a significant proportion of pupils, often boys, who experience more difficulties and struggle with what they describe as 'just sitting and writing'. In contrast, approaches to writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage are active and capitalise well on children's interests and curiosity.

The school is successfully led by the very experienced headteacher who, since the time of the last inspection, has significantly strengthened the contribution made by senior staff to improving the school. Two examples of this are pupils' excellent adoption of healthy life styles and stretching more-able pupils. Staff are now very aware of the needs of this group in their teaching and provide programmes of imaginative extra activities. The team of senior staff and governors know what the school does well and what needs to be further improved. A few areas of monitoring,

such as the development of recent changes to curriculum themes, are weaker. However, the school's track record of enhancing and consolidating its performance confirm there is good capacity for sustained improvement.

## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- strengthen pupils' progress in writing by:
  - adapting the teaching sequence of sessions to match the needs of particular classes
  - using grouping and adult support more flexibly during lessons
  - extending successful approaches to writing across different subjects
  - extending successful approaches to early writing in the Early Years Foundation Stage to some pupils in Key Stage 1.
  
- rigorously monitor:
  - the learning of different groups of pupils during lesson observations to help teachers evaluate the impact of different classroom strategies
  - the planning of themed work to ensure pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding are developed progressively
  - targets for the promotion of community cohesion to gauge the school's success in this area of its work.

## Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

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Most pupils make good progress in lessons and over time and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. Pupils are motivated and keen to please their teachers and other adults. Pupils who have learning or behavioural difficulties, often boys, respond well to adults in small group sessions and particularly enjoy these additional activities. This small group work supports their good progress as, on occasions, they behave less well and make less progress in whole-class activities. In general terms, progress speeds up in the final years of the school and gaps between the attainment of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls, diminish.

Pupils' behaviour overall is good and they mature into polite, thoughtful and considerate young people. A particularly successful aspect of their personal development is the opportunities they all have to take on extra responsibilities as they get older. They enjoy being members and leaders of school teams and show a particular concern for the well-being of younger pupils at the school, enjoying opportunities to help out. The School Council, for example, is keen to enhance facilities for pupils of all ages. Pupils develop a strong sense of fairness and confirm that incidents of racism and bullying are rare.

*These are the grades for pupils' outcomes*

Pupils' attainment <sup>1</sup>	2
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<sup>1</sup> The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and their progress	2
How well do pupils achieve and enjoy their learning?	2
To what extent do pupils feel safe?	2
How well do pupils behave?	2
To what extent do pupils adopt healthy lifestyles?	1
To what extent do pupils contribute to the school and wider community?	2
Pupils' attendance <sup>1</sup>	1
How well do pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being?	2
What is the extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development?	2

## How effective is the provision?

Teaching in the school typically caters well for the pupils' differing needs, including those who are more able or particularly gifted or talented. A successful example in one writing lesson was where, pupils wrote imaginative descriptions of themselves as different types of chairs. A good mix of different activities, such as talking to partners and then quickly developing ideas as a class to demonstrate the key points, were features of the best lessons. These gave pupils a range of ideas and a good, brisk start to their independent work. Thorough assessment was evident in nearly all lessons. Teachers' marking is clear and helpful; pupils know the targets they are aiming for and have good opportunities to assess their own progress. Thorough assessment procedures are also key to the good progress pupils make in additional programmes and sessions. Pupils are carefully selected to take part in these and supported by skilful adults.

Since the last inspection, staff have been developing creative links between different subjects in the curriculum. This has been a success and 'focus fortnights' are popular with pupils, as are the clubs, visits and other initiatives and events. In their different ways, the experience of performing at the Albert Hall or teaching younger pupils to skip support pupils' good personal development. Staff are currently planning to extend 'focus fortnights' and to ensure that pupils' skills in different subjects are developed systematically through these themes.

The school is rightly proud of the way it helps pupils who are more vulnerable. Staff organise a wide range of successful extra programmes and activities and can point to significant successes in helping pupils overcome difficult periods through work within school and through partnership with specialists. One successful example praised by parents is a programme for some pupils to thoroughly prepare them for their imminent move to secondary school.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

The quality of teaching	2
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The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

## How effective are leadership and management?

Senior staff are fully committed to continuous improvement. Responsibility is shared appropriately and this is evident, for example, in the way they use their expertise to help develop the teaching in other classes. However, lesson observations, which are part of this process, do not yet focus strongly enough on the classroom learning of different groups of pupils. Systems to safeguard pupils and tackle inequalities are very thorough and these aspects are covered fully in the school's comprehensive programme of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. As a result, older pupils talk with maturity about issues such as racism and show a good awareness of common values and how to keep themselves safe in school and in the wider world. The school is successfully building on such work to promote community cohesion, although targets for measuring its success in this are weaker.

### *These are the grades for leadership and management*

The effectiveness of leadership and management in communicating ambition and driving improvement	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

## Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enjoy learning in this bright and busy environment. Most children join with the expected skills for their age, but a significant minority have less well-developed social and language skills. The stimulating programme of activities helps all children to develop their interests, skills and independence and so do well. The majority of children reach or exceed the levels expected for their age in most areas of learning by the time they join Year 1.

Staff have been very successful in developing children's early skills by picking up on their interests and extending their experiences. Girls and boys, enthused by the

recent visit of a firefighter, designed and built their own fire engine in the outdoor area, which provided them with excellent opportunities for shared imaginative play, as did the indoor ‘fire station’. Building on such experiences, children were keen to write about the visit and to fill in forms concerning incidents and 999 calls. Activities led by adults also work well. Children enjoy their daily sessions in small groups which help them link sounds and letters and, as a result, some are able to spell words like ‘lunch’ independently.

Staff adapt their approaches well to different children. For example, children who are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language are well provided for. Staff begin by ensuring that children who are new to English feel safe and secure and then move on to more specific planned opportunities to develop their English skills. The indoor and outdoor areas are imaginatively used, but both have shortcomings. For example, children do not have access to an all-weather outdoor area and the access route through the space limits its use.

Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

## Views of parents and carers

Parents’ views of the school were very positive and in particular recognised the good quality of the school’s leadership and management. A few parents felt that the school should take a stricter line on poor behaviour, but almost all parents felt that their own children enjoyed school, were kept safe and healthy and were pleased with their child’s academic progress and personal development.

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Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Widmer End Combined School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school. If a parent has more than one child at the school, we ask them to record an answer against all the questions, for each of their children.

The inspection team received 112 completed questionnaires. In total, there are 150 parents and carers registered at the school.

	Always	Most of the time	Occasionally	Never
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	82	28	2	0



## What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. In 2007-8, 15% of schools were judged to be outstanding.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well. In 2007-8, 49% of schools were judged good.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils. In 2007-8, 32% of schools were judged satisfactory.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves. In 2007-8, 5% of schools were judged inadequate.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

- Attainment:** the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
- Progress:** the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.
- Achievement:** the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, training or development. This may refer to the acquisition of skills, knowledge, understanding or desired attributes. Attributes include qualities or personal competencies which are important to the development of the pupil; for example personal, social, cultural, emotional or health.
- Capacity to improve:** the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
- Leadership and management:** the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.



09 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Widmer End Combined School, High Wycombe, HP15 6AH

Thank you for welcoming us to your school recently. We enjoyed seeing how you work in your lessons and in some of the extra activities the adults arrange for you. We worked very closely with your headteacher and also spent time talking to some of your teachers and governors and looking at your work. Your parents' questionnaires also helped us understand what they like about Widmer End. We even managed to spend a little time at your Junior Sports Day.

We judged that Widmer End is a good school. Your teachers know you well and find lots of different ways to help you learn and develop as young people. We saw this in your lessons and in the different programmes and extra activities the school sets up for you. This helps you to do well and you usually reach standards that are above average. Just as importantly, you develop good personal skills, learn how to get on with others and take responsibility for yourselves and for helping the school. We were very pleased to see how well you all attend. So well done!

As you probably know, your teachers have been working hard on ways to make sure you make as good progress in your writing as you do, for example, in your reading. Some of their ideas have been very successful. So we have asked them to carry on sharing their good ideas and trying things out, so they find just the right ways to get you as excited about writing as they are!

Your headteacher, senior staff and governors work together well as a team to keep on improving the school. They keep a careful check on the progress you make and make sure they find out what you and your parents think. We have asked them to look at what you are learning when they observe lessons or plan their 'focus fortnights', as well as to check what they do to help children and adults come together as a community. They are already good at making sure you learn to appreciate and respect others, so they have a lot of experience to draw on.

We hope your summer fair was just as successful as your sports day and send you our best wishes for the future.

Yours faithfully

Nicola Davies  
Lead Inspector

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