

Woodlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	118431
Local Authority	Medway
Inspection number	326826
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	George Logan

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)	393
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	Richard Vassiliou
Headteacher	Nick Fiddaman
Date of previous school inspection	19 June 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Woodlands Road Gillingham ME7 2DU
Telephone number	01634 338778
Fax number	01634 338779

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Woodlands Primary School is larger than average. The number of pupils on roll has increased significantly since the last inspection and, from September 2009, there will be two classes in each year group. The pupils are predominantly White British. A very small number do not speak English as their first language. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is well above average. The majority of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social problems. The school experiences a higher than average level of pupil mobility. Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children in the Nursery and Reception is reported upon in this inspection. There is also a children's centre associated with the school, which is inspected separately, with 70 younger children on roll. The school manages an extensive range of community provision. It provides before- and after-school childcare facilities, is open daytime and evenings throughout the week and has its own community arts centre, recording studio, sports centre and counselling service. It hosts a Saturday school for gifted and talented pupils and provides other weekend classes.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

The overall effectiveness of Woodlands Primary School is satisfactory. It has a blend of significant strengths within its pastoral work and satisfactory academic achievement. Key features are its very strong links with the community it serves and high-quality care for pupils' personal needs. Consequently, pupils develop very positive attitudes to learning and behave outstandingly well. They enjoy school, make an excellent contribution to its smooth running and have a strong sense of their local community and the wider world. Parents particularly value the school's support for individual pupils. Its impact is captured in the comment of one parent who wrote, 'My child is now brimming with confidence, excited about education and looking forward to a bright future.'

Despite these strengths, the main reason that the school is satisfactory overall is because, in response to largely satisfactory teaching, academic achievement varies as pupils move through the school and is satisfactory overall. Achievement is strongest in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 6, where teaching and learning are good. Children in Nursery and Reception benefit from high-quality facilities and stimulating resources, which extend their learning successfully. The lift at the top end of the school ensures pupils reach broadly average standards overall as they move on to secondary education, with above average standards in science. Evidence from lessons and pupils' work completed this year shows satisfactory progress in other year groups. To a large degree academic performance is affected by the high proportion of pupils moving in and out of the school, which affects the attainment of each year group; this is particularly true for the two years making up Key Stage 1, where attainment dips to mostly below average levels. Nevertheless, teaching often lacks pace and activities are not consistently as well matched to pupils' needs or as demanding as they should be, particularly for higher attaining pupils. As a result, too few gain the higher levels.

Leadership and management as a whole are satisfactory. The headteacher is passionately committed to the community aspects of the school's work, and these links bring a unique character to its work. In addition, pupils' experience is enriched further by an extremely wide range of additional curriculum activities. Staff work closely as a team and other senior and key staff make a sound contribution to the school's academic development. However, the quality of monitoring and evaluation at all levels is not yet rigorous enough to gain a sharp and accurate understanding of all aspects of the school's performance, especially in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and the analysis of pupils' academic outcomes. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are strong advocates for the school's innovative work within the community and particularly effective in this aspect of their support. Their knowledge of standards and achievement, however, is not so strong and this constrains their ability to hold the school fully to account. Given the balance of all these factors, the school has satisfactory capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The school identifies a higher attainment on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage since its last inspection, although attainment into the Nursery remains below expectations. Good progress brings attainment to a broadly expected level when children leave the Nursery. Good achievement is maintained in Reception so that standards are above average for most children by the end of the year. Children settle quickly into the Nursery as a result of well-structured

induction arrangements. They benefit from good resources, effective teaching and targeted support, including those with additional learning needs. Reception children are also cared for outstandingly well and benefit from close relationships with staff. These qualities contribute strongly to their outstanding personal and social development. Children feel safe, have positive attitudes to learning and behave well. They also enjoy a wide variety of activities which enable them to develop independence. Children select activities confidently, persist at tasks and respond well to requests.

Leadership and management here are good, and the scope and quality of the school's pre-school provision has increased in recent years. Staff plan activities carefully, based on accurate assessment of children's needs. The temporary outdoor area is generally used well, although some activities, particularly in mathematical development, do not always provide enough challenge. Effective teaching of the linking of letters and sounds supports good progress in reading and writing, although progress in writing is not as rapid as in other areas.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that pupils in Years 1 and 2 make more rapid progress so that standards at the end of Year 2 are raised.
- Ensure that teaching across the school offers greater pace and challenge, particularly for more-able pupils, planning tasks more consistently matched to their needs.
- Improve, at all levels of leadership, the rigour of monitoring and analysis of pupils' academic performance.

A small proportion of 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

Pupils' work completed this academic year and the current quality of learning during lessons show mostly satisfactory progress after the Early Years Foundation Stage, leading to satisfactory achievement as a whole. The considerable movement of pupils in and out of the school means that attainment changes within individual cohorts. This factor particularly influences standards by Year 2, where they dip on those reached at the end of Reception, largely to below average levels. The current Year 2, for example, has a significant minority of lower attaining pupils. Nevertheless, a lack of challenge in pupils' work in most year groups also inhibits progress to its current satisfactory level, especially for the more able.

Satisfactory progress is maintained through Years 3 to 5, although achievement rises at Year 6 in response to good teaching. As a result, standards at the end of Year 6 are broadly average in mathematics and English, and above average in science where strengths in investigative work are particularly successful. This picture has been a consistent pattern over several years. The school is generally on track to meet its targets this year, though with fewer pupils than anticipated at the higher Level 5. Pupils with additional learning needs benefit from effective interventions to strengthen basic skills, but also to address issues of social and emotional well-being, so that they are receptive to learning. As a result, these pupils achieve well, particularly those in Years 3 to 6. The few pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve satisfactorily.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils are proud of their school. They enthusiastically support the extensive range of activities and feel fortunate to have access to impressive facilities. They are considerate of each other, feel very secure, have confidence in adults and few concerns about bullying. Their excellent behaviour illustrates a keen understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. As a result, there is only the rare need for temporary exclusion from school. When given the opportunity they collaborate well in lessons. Effective action has remedied previous shortcomings in pupils' awareness of other faiths and cultures, enriched by the school's international weeks.

Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy, illustrated in a high take-up of sporting activities. They contribute extremely well to the school community through classroom responsibilities and an active school council. They are confident that their views are listened to. In spite of some impressive personal qualities and positive attitudes, given satisfactory academic performance their preparation for the future is sound. While many attend well, overall attendance is slightly below average.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Most teaching observed was satisfactory, although there were some good lessons. Teaching is strongest and most challenging in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 6. This is evident in pupils' written work and is consistent with the variability in achievement across the school. While there are strengths, such as the very positive relationships and the motivation of pupils even when lessons are less than stimulating, there are also areas for development. Some lessons do not have a sufficiently brisk pace and this affects achievement. Introductions, for example, can be over-extended. Importantly, tasks are not always matched sufficiently to pupils' needs and consequently do not provide enough challenge. These shortcomings affect learning, particularly of more-able pupils. The marking of pupils' work, however, mostly provides clear guidance for improvement, particularly in English. Older pupils often record work independently and evaluate their success, and this valuable approach is now being promoted across the school. Teaching assistants effectively support pupils with additional learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is significantly enhanced by an excellent range of clubs, visits and events. The performing arts are strongly promoted, benefitting from the expertise available in the arts centre. For example, 90 pupils receive individual music tuition for a very broad range of instruments. Links with the sports centre also give pupils a wide choice of sporting activities. Pupils were particularly pleased with their recent production of Dr Seuss. These strengths meet the needs of the pupils successfully and contribute greatly to the development of their social skills, cultural awareness and enthusiasm for school life. Provision for pupils who need additional support is extensive, leading to good progress.

There is an appropriate emphasis, particularly with the older pupils, on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills, both discretely and through other subjects although, in general, detailed planning does not always focus closely enough on how skills are

to be taught. The school is moving to greater integration of subjects, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Good opportunities exist to develop writing across the curriculum and practical science activities are developed well. Recent initiatives, such as reinforcing awareness of letter sounds and writing skills in Years 1 and 2, and spelling in Years 3 to 6, together with a new mathematics scheme in Years 1 and 2, have begun to focus attention more closely on increasing pupils' progress.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Pastoral care is outstanding. Procedures in relation to child protection, first aid and health and safety matters are rigorous and highly effective. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils meet current requirements. Staff are deeply committed to meeting the welfare needs of children and families. This includes access to counselling and mentor services within school and a wide range of agency support. These facilities contribute strongly to pupils' good personal development, including those with social and emotional needs. Focused attention is given to promoting good attendance. The school invests heavily in support for pupils with additional learning needs. Academic guidance is well supported by strong structures that are common across the school. These ensure that those with additional needs receive a good level of support. There is a well-established system of individual targets in most year groups, mainly in English and mathematics, but sometimes also in science. These are particularly effective in Year 6, where they have helped ensure pupils make good, rather than satisfactory, progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher's commitment to the local community and its needs has made a major impact on the school and provides an outstanding contribution to community cohesion. His vision and energy mean that several thousand people make use of the school's facilities and support services each week, while links have also been established with schools abroad. The special quality that these on-site services bring to the school and its high-quality pastoral care ensure that equal opportunities are good overall and pupils' personal achievements are very strongly promoted. However, the school is not yet as successful in relation to its academic work.

Staff work closely together, sharing the school's ideals and commitment. Given the range of activities in which the headteacher is involved, significant responsibilities have been delegated to other staff. However, they do not always have the scope to influence fully the quality of provision and outcomes. Leaders at all levels are not sufficiently rigorous or incisive in monitoring standards and progress or the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the school's evaluation of its performance is not always accurate. Governors firmly support the headteacher's philosophy, but do not yet have the detailed knowledge of academic performance needed to challenge the school fully about the quality of its education and outcomes.

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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?	1
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?	1
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?	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	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
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	1
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?	2
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?	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	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	1
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**

2 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodlands Primary School, Gillingham ME7 2DU

Thank you for making us very welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed meeting you and spending time in your lessons. We found that your school is satisfactory overall, with some important strengths.

- The main things that we found are these.
- You behave extremely well and work very hard.
- Standards in Year 6 are average, and better in science where you do lots of investigations.
- While some of the teaching we saw was good, most is satisfactory.
- Children in the Nursery and Reception get off to a good start.
- The school makes sure that you are cared for exceptionally well. You conduct yourselves very safely and you know how important it is to eat healthily.
- The curriculum is good, with exceptional out-of-school opportunities. Those of you who need extra support and those who learn quickly are well provided for.
- Those in charge of the school make sure that it runs smoothly.

We are asking the school to make these changes so that you do even better.

- Ensure that you make more rapid progress so that standards are higher at the end of Year 2.
- Make sure that the teaching has a brisk pace and that the work is challenging to help faster learners make more progress.
- See that all the school leaders check carefully the quality of teaching and the progress you make, so that they can make teaching and learning even better.

You can help by continuing to work hard and do your best. We hope that you will have every success in the future.

Yours faithfully

George Logan

Lead inspector