

Woodlands Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135136
Local Authority	Cheshire West and Chester
Inspection number	329035
Inspection dates	7–8 May 2009
Reporting inspector	Diane Auton

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)	557
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	Mr Mark Bergin
Headteacher	Mrs Anne Vickers
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Eddisbury Road Whitby Ellesmere Port CH66 2JT
Telephone number	0151 338 2260
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

Description of the school

This large school serves a residential area of mainly owner-occupied housing. It opened in September 2007, following the amalgamation of Woodlands Infant and Junior schools. The school's accommodation is on two sites and extensive renovation work is currently underway in the former junior school building. A new headteacher was appointed at the start of the summer term in 2008. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a small proportion from other heritages. A very small number of pupils are at an early stage of learning to speak English. The proportion of pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school is resourced by its local authority to provide eight places for pupils with auditory difficulties. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in the Reception classes and in morning sessions in the 26-place Nursery class. Most children join the school at the start of Reception, however, after attending pre-school provision in a wide range of other settings. In partnership with a local special school, the school provides a small number of dual registration placements in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 for children with complex physical and learning needs. The school holds the Activemark and the Artsmark (Silver) and an accreditation for speech and language.

There is privately managed extended childcare provision on site which was subject to separate inspection.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Woodlands Primary School provides a good standard of education for its pupils. The new school has had a challenging first year, with a six-month delay before the appointment of a headteacher. Despite this setback, however, the school has shown good achievement and standards in Key Stage 1 and standards and achievement have begun to rise in Key Stage 2. Pupils have continued to flourish in their personal development and well-being and the school has provided good standards of pastoral care and to develop its inclusive ethos.

Children start school with skills that are at the expected levels for their age. They make good progress in Key Stage 1 to reach above average standards at the end of Year 2. Progress has speeded up in Key Stage 2 in the current year, and, as a result, pupils in Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards in all subjects by the end of the year. Broadly average standards at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008, however, reflected a relatively slower rate of progress for this age group. The issues around this problem have been tackled and a recovery has begun. However, there is more to do to ensure that the more able pupils progress at a consistently brisk rate across the year groups and subject areas in Key Stage 2, so that they may achieve as well as they possibly can. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language achieve well in relation to their starting points and abilities, because of the good provision the school makes for them.

The quality of teaching is good. The school is currently working to improve on this picture, to ensure consistently high quality of provision. Where teaching is most effective, pupils are given a clear understanding of the purposes of their learning tasks, the pace of learning is brisk and activities are matched well to the needs of learners of all abilities. Where it is less effective, learning proceeds at a slower pace and the more able pupils are not always sufficiently extended or challenged. The curriculum has been revised to ensure that it is interesting and relevant for pupils and this is helping them to enjoy learning. Good pastoral care enables pupils to feel secure and ready to learn. The quality of assessments and procedures to track progress has been improved this year, with a formal review of all pupils' progress each term. This has begun to impact positively on the standards that pupils reach. Work has begun to involve pupils in reviewing their own progress against individual learning targets, to give them a clear understanding of how well they are doing. This initiative is at an early stage, but it has started to help to move pupils' learning forward.

Parents say they feel that their children are cared for well. Attendance is good, reflecting good relationships between home and school. Pupils' good behaviour and positive attitudes mean that lessons run smoothly and playtimes are happy. Pupils develop good social skills and moral values and have a good understanding of how to keep safe. Their spiritual development is nurtured well through opportunities for reflection in assemblies and in lessons. Good opportunities are provided to develop their cultural awareness and to prepare them for life in a multicultural society. Pupils are active fundraisers for a range of charitable causes and they show concern for the needs of others. The school's strong focus on healthy living, ecological awareness and community involvement contributes well to pupils' good personal development. Pupils with auditory difficulties and those with complex additional needs are well cared for and provision to ensure their inclusion and progress is extremely good, reflecting the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all of its pupils.

Good leadership and management ensure that the school runs effectively. The headteacher, the deputy headteacher and an effective group of middle managers are united in their resolve to bring about school improvement. They are supported well by knowledgeable governors who have steered the school safely through its challenging first year. Systems are in place to ensure that the quality of provision is monitored rigorously, and the school's self-evaluation is largely accurate. All of these factors mean that the school has good capacity for continued improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and enables children to make a good start to their education, and to become happy and receptive learners. High-quality provision in the Nursery class ensures that those children who attend are very well prepared for Reception. When they join the Nursery, children's abilities are in line with national expectations. They gain significantly in confidence and enthusiasm for learning and achieve well. Overall, attainment by the end of the Reception Year is at expected levels for the age group, although it is often higher in pupils' personal and social development, their knowledge and understanding of the world and their physical and creative development. In addition, daily sessions focusing on letters and sounds are helping to boost early reading and writing skills and this has started to impact positively on children's achievement in literacy. The quality of teaching is good and stimulates learning well. The curriculum provides activities, indoors and in the outdoor areas, which are well matched to the children's needs, with plenty of interest and fun for them. Provision to ensure children's welfare is extremely good, helped by good links with external agencies, and children enjoy warm relationships with the very caring staff. Parents are welcomed as partners in their children's learning and assessment. Excellent provision for children with auditory difficulties and those in dual placements enables them to progress well in this inclusive setting. Vulnerable children, those with additional learning needs and those at an early stage of learning English, are all supported well. Children's progress is observed carefully and assessment is systematic, so that additional support is given promptly to those who need it.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and improve achievement of the more able pupils in Key Stage 2.
- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good or outstanding in all lessons, so that the pace of learning is brisk and learning activities provide appropriate challenge for all pupils, including the more able.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement is good. From generally average starting points on entry to Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress in all subjects in Years 1 and 2. Standards at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average. At the end of Year 6 standards in science are above average. Standards in English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average in 2008 and fewer pupils than would have been expected reached the higher level in these subjects. However, inspection evidence shows an improved picture in the current year, with pupils in Year 6 on track to reach above average standards in both English and mathematics, and an increased proportion of pupils reaching higher targets. The school's detailed records show that the overall rate of progress for all pupils in Key Stage 2 has improved during the current school year. Although the school has worked hard to address past issues of underachievement of pupils in

Key Stage 2, the more able pupils are not always stretched and challenged enough in all classes so they do not always reach the standards they are capable of. There is still more to do to ensure consistency of progress across all year groups and subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language all achieve well in Key Stages 1 and 2, as a result of the good provision made for them in this inclusive school.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' good personal development contributes well to their good achievement. It is shown in their good behaviour, courtesy and positive attitudes to school and in their good attendance and punctuality. The school's nurturing ethos ensures that pupils grow in self-esteem and form good-quality relationships with staff and with each other. Their spiritual, moral and social development is good. The school's inclusive character prepares them well for the future, as pupils grow and work together happily in friendships that encompass a wide range of abilities and individual needs. Pupils' developing awareness of global issues is being fostered through the curriculum and they are starting to gain an insight into what life is like for children around the world. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility, for example as play leaders, road safety officers or school councillors. They collaborate well in groups or with a partner in lessons. These important life skills are developed well and this, together with their good basic skills in literacy and numeracy, means that pupils are prepared well for the future. They are able to speak knowledgeably about how to keep healthy and safe. Pupils' smooth transition to the next stage in their education is supported well by the school's links with the high school. Parents appreciate the particularly careful support given to pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities at transition points.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The overall quality of teaching is good and this effectively underpins the good progress pupils make. In the most effective lessons, teachers use questioning well, encouraging pupils to develop their thinking and at the same time assessing their understanding of their work. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and give clear explanations and instructions, so that pupils know what is expected of them in the lesson. They give good attention to timings and pace, so that learning moves along briskly and pupils are purposefully engaged and challenged throughout the lesson. In less effective lessons, the more able pupils occasionally lose concentration because activities are not sufficiently challenging for them or because the pace of learning is too slow. Across the school, teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively to make learning interesting. Learning activities usually engage pupils' interests and they are responsive in lessons and apply themselves well. Happy relationships in the well managed classrooms enable pupils to feel secure and ready to learn. Teaching assistants work in partnership with class teachers, making a very effective contribution to all pupils' learning, particularly those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those at an early stage of learning English as an additional language.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good-quality curriculum contributes well to pupils' personal, social, health and academic development. A focus on developing pupils' basic skills in English and mathematics is beginning to contribute well to improving standards and achievement. Pupils use computers and other everyday technology with increasing confidence and frequency in their work across subjects. The curriculum is enriched very well through visitors to school, educational visits, including residential trips, and a good range of after-school activities in sport and dance. Pupils say their lessons are interesting. They are provided with opportunities to practise and develop key skills including modern foreign languages through topics and themes which link subjects together. Some good examples can be seen of how this is helping them to improve their writing skills, for example in a science lesson in Key Stage 1, where pupils carefully recorded the results of their investigations about what plants need for healthy growth. Display around the school reflects the very high standard and wide range of pupils work in art and design.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides very good pastoral care for all of its pupils. Those with additional physical, medical and learning needs are very well supported, fully included and enabled to progress well in an inclusive mainstream setting. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language are also supported well to become effective communicators. Pupils say they are confident that adults are readily on hand to help with any problems that arise and this makes them feel secure. The school works well with external agencies to promote pupils' progress, health and well-being and complies with statutory requirements for health and safety including safeguarding and child protection. The quality of the academic guidance for pupils is good overall and pupils are given good verbal feedback in lessons. A new system using individual targets to enhance pupils' learning is starting to have a positive impact on their progress. Marking practice is currently being developed and strengthened to ensure that pupils are regularly given good advice on how to improve their work. Effective and successful measures have been taken to improve attendance in the new school, through the use of positive incentives and through working with families for whom regular attendance has been a problem in the past.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher provides good leadership. Her clear vision for taking the school forward is shared by governors and staff at all levels. Systems for evaluating how well the school is doing are firmly in place and are being used well. Effective senior staff and subject leaders assist well in ensuring the good quality of provision. Whole-school improvement targets are challenging and aspirational, and leaders identify and plan appropriate actions to achieve them. As a result, standards have begun to rise at Key Stage 2. A strong team ethos enables staff to share and develop their skills. The supportive governing body has guided the development of the new school in its first year; governors are able to hold the school to account and act as its critical friend. The school addresses community cohesion well through a range of partnerships, such as with the high school and its partner special school, activities in the community and links with

a school in Africa. Partnerships with parents are developed well through regular communications and through a range of initiatives that support parents' involvement in their children's learning.

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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?	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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
The standards ¹ 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/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	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
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 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

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	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 eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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**

Inspection of Woodlands Primary School, Ellesmere Port, CH66 2JX

Thank you for making the inspection team so welcome when we visited your school. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are all getting on with your learning. We found that the school is giving you a good standard of education. These are some of the best things we discovered about the school.

- The Early Years Foundation Stage gets your education off to a good start.
- Standards are high in Key Stage 1 and they are rising in Key Stage 2. The school is improving and you are all starting to make more rapid progress in your learning. Keep up the good work!
- You are taught well and your teachers make lessons interesting; this is helping you to improve your skills across all the subjects.
- Your behaviour is good and you are caring and thoughtful young people; this helps to make the school a good place to learn and grow.
- The grown-ups in school look after you well.

There is still work to be done to make Woodlands the best school it can possibly be. I have asked the headteacher and the staff to continue the drive to raise standards and achievement by:

- making sure that learning moves along briskly in all of your lessons and that activities are always challenging for everyone, including the more able among you
- making sure that those of you in Key Stage 2 who are capable of reaching high standards all achieve as well as you possibly can.

You can help by continuing to be happy learners.

With my very best wishes for the future.