

The Winchcombe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135079
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	333447
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Reporting inspector	Maria Dawes HMI

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

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)	215
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	52
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	Interim executive
Chair	Mr P Dick board
Headteacher	Mr F Rayner (Executive)/ Mrs S Ball (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Maple Crescent Shaw Newbury RG14 1LN
Telephone number	01635 232780

Age group	3–11
Inspection dates	30 June –1 July 2009
Inspection number	333447

Fax number

01635 232789

Age group	3-11
Inspection dates	30 June -1 July 2009
Inspection number	333447

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

The Winchcombe School is an average-sized primary school, which was opened in 2005 following the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are provided for in two mixed Nursery/Reception classes. On entry, children's attainment is well below average, with the level of language development being poor. There is specialist provision from the local authority for pupils on the school roll with a statement of special need, who have speech and language difficulties. As a result, the proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is considerably higher than that found nationally.

A privately run pre-school and before- and after-school club operates on the school's premises.

When the school was inspected in February 2007 it was given a notice to improve, because substantial improvement was required in relation to inconsistencies in teaching in order to raise pupils' standards and achievements. The subsequent inspection a year later found that the school had not demonstrated the capacity to secure the necessary improvement and so the school was placed in special measures. Since then the substantive headship has been covered by the deputy headteacher. In addition, an executive headteacher seconded from a local school took up post in June 2008. There is currently an acting deputy and assistant headteacher. A number of other staff have left since the last inspection. An interim executive board (IEB) has taken the place of the governing body.

The executive headteacher has been appointed to the substantive post from September 2009.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures. This is now a good school. Since the last inspection, there have been rapid improvements in provision, in particular in teaching and learning. This has resulted in pupils making good progress, which redresses the severe underachievement of the years prior to the last inspection. Although it is still below the national average, the proportion of children in all years who are working at age-related expectations is considerably higher than in the previous two years. The senior leadership has been at the heart of this transformation, spearheading the drive to improve outcomes for pupils, and it has been taken up by all staff. The atmosphere in the school is one in which pupils enjoy what they do, work hard and become confident and mature individuals. In the words of one pupil, 'We are a welcoming school where everyone can learn!'

The senior leadership team, working closely with the local authority, has provided very good training and coaching opportunities for teachers. As a result, teaching and learning are now good. Lessons are stimulating, practical and fun! Pupils are keen to learn and teachers provide lots of opportunities for pupils to share ideas with each other and frequently challenge them by skilful questioning. Very regular and comprehensive systems are in place to assess and monitor pupils' progress. Teachers use this information in their planning to take account of the range of abilities in each class, although, occasionally, this is not applied consistently and some pupils are not challenged as much as they might be.

The school is awash with colourful and inspiring displays, much of which is pupils' work, which creates a stimulating learning environment. In particular, 'learning walls' offer effective support, guidance and challenge. The school has a satisfactory but developing curriculum. Much has been done to enliven the curriculum in the core subjects, although links between subjects and opportunities for pupils to apply the skills they have learnt in the core subjects are more limited.

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is strong, enabling children to overcome many barriers and achieve average levels by the start of Year 1. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are supported well and make similar progress to their peers. Staff in the speech and language unit work closely with the main school staff to ensure continuity of provision and plans are in place to ensure that there is even stronger integration. There is an extensive range of interventions to support pupils that are struggling in literacy and numeracy and these have contributed strongly to the rapid progress of the majority of children. In particular, it has had a very positive impact on increasing pupils' ability to read more confidently. Learning support assistants work well to support both individuals and groups of pupils.

A strong contributory factor to pupils' good progress is their good attitudes to school and their behaviour, which is considerably better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' personal development is good. Nevertheless, opportunities for pupils to make a full contribution to the local community are more limited and many lack a full understanding of life in a multi-ethnic and diverse world. All staff know and care for the pupils very well. Despite very rigorous actions by the school, the rate of absence, although decreased, is still high.

Incisive and enthusiastic leadership has successfully established a shared vision for the school's work and all staff have worked unstintingly towards this. The school's self-evaluation is realistic and plans for improvement are designed to maintain momentum. The IEB has done an excellent job, working tirelessly to aid the school's recovery. The external support has been gradually

reduced as the school is able to work independently. The current acting senior leadership team has been remodelled to provide a sustainable and distributive leadership. Given its track record since the last inspection, it has good capacity to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children make a good start to school life because of careful induction procedures, and the very good care and support provided by dedicated staff. Their social and emotional skills are developed well and they learn to share as well as to develop good independence. Children enter the Nursery and Reception with skills that are below those expected for their age, particularly in language and communication and some areas of numeracy. They make good progress and reach levels that are broadly in line with those expected for their age in most areas of their learning by the start of Year 1. Planning and resources are good, and a stimulating range of well-balanced activities, led by adults or initiated by children, are organised in both the indoor and outside learning areas. The beach theme for Reception children, for example, provided great enjoyment as children pretended to be at the seaside and even bought fruit cocktails from the beach bar. Observations of children's involvement in activities are detailed and used well in the very good records of achievement for each child, which are regularly shared with parents. Staff create good opportunities to develop children's speaking and listening skills. Nevertheless, children's oral skills can be further improved by staff speaking a little more slowly and precisely to children so they have a clear model to follow, especially children new to learning English. The Early Years Foundation Stage is very efficiently managed and staff work as a well-organized and strongly committed team.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in mathematics and English by consistently challenging all pupils, especially the most able, by ensuring that tasks planned in lessons are well matched to the pupils' assessed abilities.
- Improve the curriculum by extending learning opportunities for pupils by linking subjects, extending extra-curricular opportunities and planning more opportunities for pupils to explore the local and wider community.
- Improve attendance by continuing to emphasise to parents/carers the impact of absence and late arrival to school on their child's progress.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils are now making rapid progress and redressing the underachievement of the past. The progress for many pupils has been outstanding, particularly in the infants. The school's detailed tracking shows that, in all years, the proportion of children working below age-related expectations has decreased and that, in most years, this decrease is very significant. Progress has been slower for pupils in Year 5. This year group suffered from a particularly disruptive educational history, which led to poor attitudes to learning that have taken longer to reverse. Nevertheless, inspection evidence demonstrates that attitudes in class are much improved and the rate of learning is accelerating.

Although pupils are narrowing the gap, standards overall by the end of both Year 2 and Year 6 remain below those found nationally in reading, writing and mathematics, due to the very severe underachievement in the years prior to the last inspection. Nonetheless, the school is

well on track to meet its challenging targets. The leadership and other staff are aware of the need to sustain the momentum of current improvements to improve pupils' attainment further.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Behaviour is good and pupils show pride in their school. The new behaviour policy is respected and is well integrated in the school. Pupils want to reach the high standards they have set for themselves and so the majority behave well in lessons and around the school. They have a well-developed sense of behaving safely and fully understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Good behaviour and positive relationships foster a productive learning environment, and so pupils enjoy their lessons and contribute with enthusiasm. The lunch period and play-times are enjoyable, with children using the wide range of 'Huff and Puff' equipment provided for them. Pupils are friendly and polite. Bullying is rare and any incidents of poor behaviour are dealt with quickly and fairly. Although pupils enjoy attending school, the rate of attendance is only satisfactory. Levels of attendance are improving due to rigorous monitoring by the school. Nevertheless, too many families continue to permit children to take short absences frequently, as a result of which valuable learning time is lost. Pupils' social and moral development is promoted well and spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils' views are sought regularly and the school council is greatly respected. Nevertheless, the degree to which they are involved in the wider community is more limited. The good progress pupils make and their good personal development ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The commitment to improving the quality of learning across the school from all staff, alongside an effective system of coaching and rigorous monitoring, has led to a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers make good use of the wealth of data they possess about pupils' attainment to plan lessons carefully. Nevertheless, work is sometimes not accurately targeted to pupils' individual needs and some teaching does not consistently challenge or support all groups of pupils. Lessons are lively, interactive and exciting. Teachers use lots of visual materials and games to grab pupils' interest. Describing lessons, one pupil commented, 'You forget you are learning!' As a result, pupils are highly motivated and keen, and are given lots of opportunities to talk about their work both with staff and with each other. Relationships in lessons are very good and learning occurs at a fast pace.

Teachers set clear learning objectives for each lesson and the pupils are very clear about what they are expected to learn and both the teachers and the pupils check how well they have achieved this. Marking and discussions with the teachers helps pupils to move forward in their learning. Teaching assistants and support teachers work very well to help individuals and groups. Sometimes, this support hinders opportunities for pupils to apply their skills with a greater degree of independence.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school has put in place a wide range of strategies to ensure that the quality of the curriculum and the planning in literacy and mathematics have improved. The extensive range of daily interventions support pupils very well. With the focus on upgrading the quality of provision in the core subjects, other subject areas have not been developed as much, although some links have been forged between subjects to make learning more relevant and purposeful. For example, Food Awareness Week has been very successful in raising pupils' understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Provision in developing pupils' cultural understanding needs further strengthening. Planning is well underway to strengthen links between all subjects.

The school organises a well-planned programme of visits and visitors that adds extra enjoyment to learning. Nevertheless, extra-curricular activities, including sports clubs, are limited to one day a week, which restricts some pupils' ability to engage in a range of these.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The pastoral care and support of all pupils is good. Pupils say they know who to talk to if they have a problem. The school makes good use of a range of support partners, including family support services and other agencies, to extend the good pastoral support provided in school. The school is not complacent and is now seeking to extend the links between home and school to provide further support for pupils. Procedures to promote safeguarding and to ensure the health, safety and well-being of pupils are robust.

Improved systems to track pupils' individual progress more frequently help staff to identify quickly any pupils who are falling behind and to intervene promptly to help them. As a result, academic guidance and support have improved and are now good. In classes, teachers involve pupils in setting and reviewing their learning targets in literacy and numeracy. Pupils value their targets and say they find them helpful in identifying how they can make better progress.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Pivotal to the rapid improvement of the school is the senior leadership team. The executive and acting headteachers have provided exemplary leadership, with an enthusiastic and determined approach that has enabled the school to bring about swift, but sustainable, improvements in the quality of education provided. There is a real sense of team spirit among staff, with everyone sharing the leaderships focus on improving learning and raising standards; as one member of staff commented, 'There is a real drive to improve - we can do it and we are not afraid to ask for help!' The IEB has also been influential, providing outstanding strategic and day-to-day support and challenge. A shadow governing body is in place, including some members of the IEB, to establish continuity of governance.

Rigorous monitoring of all aspects of the school's provision ensures that the leadership has an accurate awareness of the school's strengths and weaknesses, in particular with regard to teaching. In turn, this has led to well-focused actions that are judged against clear, measurable targets. This has been a major contributory factor in pupils' increased rates of progress. Middle leadership has improved. The subject coordinators, in addition to taking a proactive role in

developing their subjects and leading developments and improvements, are increasingly taking a role in the monitoring of learning, although this is still at a relatively early stage.

The school has rightly focused on redressing the decline in pupils' attainment and on improving attitudes and behaviour in school. Nonetheless, work to promote community cohesion is not fully developed and the school is aware that there is a need to engage parents and the wider community further in the work of the school.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
---	----------------

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?	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?	2
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	3
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	3
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	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
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?	3
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?	3
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	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**

08 July 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Winchcombe School, Newbury, RG14 1LN

Thank you for being so friendly and welcoming when I visited your school recently with my colleague and during my previous visits. I am writing to tell you what we found.

As you know, when your school was inspected in February 2008, it was not doing as well as it should have been. I am delighted to tell you that your school has made so many improvements that it is now a good school. You are now making good progress in your work, especially in literacy, mathematics and science. This is important because some of you had fallen behind. You are catching up now but must keep working hard to do even better. One of the reasons you are doing so much better is because your teachers plan interesting and lively lessons for you that are fun. You told us that you really enjoy working in this way, and that you appreciate the opportunities that your teachers give you to discuss your work. Your teachers also keep a close eye on how well you are doing and you know exactly what you need to do to improve.

I have been impressed by how your behaviour has improved over the past year and it is clear that you enjoy school. It is important that you make sure you always come to school unless you have a very good reason not to.

Your headteachers and staff have done an excellent job in making the Winchcombe School a much better place for you to learn and have fun. They are keen to make things even better. To help them do this, I have asked them to:

- make sure that, in your lessons, activities are matched to your needs all the time so that you continue to improve in mathematics and English
- develop your curriculum so that subjects are linked together and ensure that you have lots of opportunities for extra-curricular activities and to learn about people from other backgrounds
- work with your parents and carers to continue to improve attendance.

I have really enjoyed coming to visit you over the last year and am a little sad that this was my last visit. I am sure that you will all continue to work very hard to keep improving your school. I wish you lots of luck.

Yours faithfully

Maria Dawes

Her Majesty's Inspector