

Windy Arbor Junior and Infant School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	104071
Local Authority	Solihull
Inspection number	336229
Inspection dates	24–25 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Alan Dobbins

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	261
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nick Stephens
Headteacher	Jackie Denton
Date of previous school inspection	6 June 2007
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons and held meetings with the consultant headteacher, governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents, the school's improvement partner and the local authority advisor to the school. They observed the school's work and scrutinised policies and pupils' workbooks. Seventy questionnaires were returned and the results analysed.

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

- whether pupils are doing better in their learning since the last inspection
- how well initiatives are working for improving learning in English and especially in writing
- how well teachers use information about pupils' prior learning to help them plan their lessons
- how effective is the unusual leadership structure in driving school improvement.

Information about the school

Windy Arbor is a large school that serves the community around Chelmsley Wood. Most of the pupils are of White British origin. There are more pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and twice as many pupils eligible for free school meals, than is typical. The leadership structure of the school is unusual. A consultant headteacher supports the acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher for three days a week. This arrangement will last until the school formally becomes part of a federation of schools in September 2010. Procedures to appoint substantive leaders to the school before this date are under way.

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

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Windy Arbor is a good school. Over the last three years the focussed and effective efforts of good leadership have resulted in impressive gains in the progress made by pupils in all year groups. Pupils enter the school with skills and knowledge below that expected for their age. Those who left in July 2009 made good progress over their time at school and caught up with national expectations for their age in mathematics and in reading. They exceeded these in science. In writing, pupils' standards remained below national averages with boys lagging well behind the girls. Even so, the overall rate of progress for last year's leavers was good when compared with national data. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress and begin the catch up, but still enter Year 1 with standards that are below national averages in all the areas of learning. By Year 6, pupils develop into mature and rounded young people. They develop strong relationships with staff. Pupils know that if they are troubled they can go to a member of staff and they will quickly receive help. Pupils thrive as learners because they feel safe at school and enjoy being there. They contribute to the good progress they make in their lessons by attending regularly, by their good behaviour and good attitudes to their work and, routinely, by the good effort they make to do their best. Pupils know about right and wrong. Invariably they make the right choices about keeping safe and are guided well in choosing healthy lifestyles. The good gains they make in literacy and numeracy and their good progress in developing personal and social skills, mean that they are well prepared for secondary school.

Senior leaders know the school well. Their initial focus, to improve the quality of teaching in the core subjects through rigorous monitoring and evaluation, has lifted teaching so that it is routinely good and sometimes better. They have made good use of expertise from external sources such as the local authority to achieve this success. Senior leaders know that the impressive gains achieved in the core subjects must now be repeated in the foundation subjects. However, foundation subject leaders are not yet taking sufficient responsibility for raising standards in their subjects. For example, they are not tracking the progress of pupils rigorously enough. Assessment information is well used in the core subjects to support learning but its use in the foundation subjects is not as well developed. Assessment information is not used well enough in planning lessons that are always relevant to pupils' learning needs. Also, curriculum planning in these subjects is not as precise or detailed as it is for the core subjects. In combination, these act to reduce the effectiveness of teaching. Staff are unified behind the school's leadership and governors are enthusiastic about increasing their challenge to leaders in continuing to improve the school. The concerted and effective effort of leaders over the last three years in raising standards shows the capacity for sustained improvement to be

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good.

Parents' and carers' general satisfaction with the school is nicely summed up by one who said 'Lovely school, lovely teachers. I am very happy that both my children enjoy going every morning and come home with a smile.'

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise achievement in writing, especially that of boys.
 - Improve the effectiveness of teaching in the foundation subjects by:
 - making better use of on going assessment information in planning lessons that appropriately challenge all pupils irrespective of their learning needs or capabilities
 - recording the progress pupil make.
 - Develop the role of the subject leaders, especially in the core subjects, in raising standards and in improving progress in the subjects by:
 - improving long and medium term curriculum plans
 - closely monitoring the progress pupils make.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

In the good and better lessons pupils are keen to do well and are eager to learn. Classrooms are happy places and most lessons are a hive of activity. Pupils benefit from the regular opportunities they are given to find out for themselves and gain good skills of independent learning. For example, in a history lesson on the cause of battles in World War II, pupils were researching their report from the internet, from books and prepared information sheets and from information provided directly by the teacher and the teaching assistants. All were working hard because they were excited about their learning and were enjoying the experience of collecting and evaluating the information they would include in the report to be presented to the rest of the class.

In the core subjects, careful lesson planning ensures that all pupils make equally good progress against their targets irrespective of their capability or the level of their special educational need and/or disabilities. This is a strength of teaching, except for writing. The strategies and procedures to improve writing are not working well enough. Boys are not sufficiently enthused to write neatly with due regard to punctuation, to write with imagination or to be precise enough when given a focused writing task. As a result they make less progress against expectations, and slower progress than do the girls.

The caring, 'family' environment of the school helps pupils gain a good awareness of the importance of leading safe and healthy lives. They know what is appropriate behaviour and the consequences of their own actions and report that any bullying is dealt with very quickly. That the link between exercise and keeping healthy is well known is shown by the good take up of after school sports clubs and the enjoyment pupils gain from the daily wake and shake sessions. The school council is pleased with its impact on school

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life, for example in helping organise assemblies and in selecting the national and international charities that the school will support. Spiritual, moral and social development is good. This is easily seen in the friendly way pupils interact with each other and the courtesies they show to each other and to visitors. Pupils have satisfactory knowledge about the cultural diversity of British society. Attendance is about the national average. The school has worked hard and successfully over the last three years in reducing the number of pupils who are persistently absent.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The better use of assessment information in planning lessons in English, mathematics and science has contributed to the improvement in teaching seen in these subjects. In lessons, careful planning ensures that tasks are relevant to pupils because they match with their capabilities. Teachers set clear learning objectives and targets with clear success criteria for individual pupils. Pupils like this because they know what they have to do to learn in each lesson and know whether they have achieved their learning, or not, by referring to their success criteria. The good relationships they have with their

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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teachers and teaching assistants mean that they are comfortable as learners and always eager to learn in different ways. They work well as individuals, as pairs, as members of a table, and they especially enjoy being active in their learning when they find out for themselves.

The link between assessment information and lesson planning in the foundation subjects is not as secure. As a consequence, some pupils work on tasks that are too easy for them and others on tasks that are too hard. The progress they make is limited because of this. Also, in these subjects teachers' planning is sometimes compromised because there are too few resources to support learning. For example, in a lesson in information and communication technology on writing instructions for a computer, only three programmable roamer bugs were available. Therefore, pupils had to take turns and this meant limited time to develop and practise their programming skills.

The curriculum is in the process of change. Subjects are being linked together in a more creative way so that, collectively, pupils' learning experiences form a more cohesive and exciting whole. But this is at an early stage. Regular visits to the locality, for example to the Remembrance Service and the Harvest Festival, visitors to school and the breakfast, lunchtime and after school clubs provide a satisfactory extension to the school's curriculum. Music is a developing strength and is beginning to be used well in promoting cultural awareness.

Rightly, a high priority is given to helping parents learn how they can support their children as they go through school. In this, the work of the school's child and family support worker is valued both by parents and the school. Through initiatives, such as Bubble Time, hard to reach parents are increasingly being attracted to the school as the barriers they may have had to learning and education are being dismantled. Many are taking an increasing interest in the education of their children and this is being seen in the improved behaviour and better attendance of some children. Transition arrangements for passage through the school work well, but the school is looking to improve the transition arrangements with the four secondary schools pupils typically move to.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Since the last inspection they have worked hard in embedding ambition

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and in driving up standards in the core subjects. This has been achieved by leading improvements in teaching and managing a relevant programme of training so that staff are better equipped to guide the learning of all pupils. The leaders, and all associated with the school, can be justly proud of the increased rate of progress in learning shown by the pupils who left in each of the last three years and, especially by the realisation that the rate of progress of last year's leavers was in the highest ten per cent of schools nationally.

Now that their first task is complete, senior staff are able to focus on improving other parts of the school. The improvement plan correctly recognises the need to raise standards in writing, particularly for boys, and to raise standards in the foundation subjects. The systems for recognising and recording pupils' progress are not yet sufficiently strong and subject leaders do not yet make enough contribution. Governors are becoming more confident in their role and are providing an increasing challenge in holding leaders to account for the impact of new initiatives, such as the creative curriculum.

The promotion of equal opportunity is at the heart of the school. This is seen through the effective contribution of specialists, such as the speech and language therapists and the psychologist, which helps pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities gain easy access to the curriculum. Also in the way the school is limiting the barriers to learning that can be shaped in the home by actively and effectively reaching out to parents to help them make a positive contribution to their children's education. Community cohesion is satisfactory. The actions leaders have taken have resulted in pupils knowing the religious, ethnic and socio-economic characteristics of the local community but they are less knowledgeable of issues in the wider national and international communities. The arrangements to secure pupils safety and well being are very rigorous.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3

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The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and knowledge below those expected for their age, and with particular weaknesses in their literacy and number skills. Over their time in in this stage they make good progress. When they enter Year 1 the gap between national expectations and their attainment in most areas of learning has been substantially reduced. However, their literacy and number skills, though improved, continue to lag behind.

The relationships children develop with the adults are warm, caring and supportive and these help them to quickly accept their roles as learners. They behave well, share and take turns well and take a full part in all sessions. The Early Years Foundation Stage learning team use a good range of teaching methods and ensure a good balance of adult led and child initiated activities. Teaching is good. Children routinely have chances to reinforce their learning through the use of many of the senses. For example, when learning the shape of the letter 'b', they copied it, made it out of play dough, sang about the shape and traced it in the air. Records of progress are good because they are based on accurate observations of children's learning. The accommodation is spacious and is used well in providing many different opportunities for learning and play. The outside play area is also spacious but its use is limited by a lack of resources and this means children do not gain the full benefits of working outside. The school has plans to provide additional resources.

Good leadership ensures that expectations for children's behaviour and learning are high. Leaders know full well the strong and weaker areas in the provision. Rightly, they are working hard at involving parents and carers in supporting their work at home so that their children are able to make better progress towards meeting national expectations in all the areas of learning when they enter Year 1.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
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 of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents and carers are generally supportive of all aspects of the school's work. All who responded to the questionnaire indicated they were happy with their child's experience

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at school. They are especially pleased their children are enjoying school and that they feel safe there. They are appreciative of the good leadership and good teaching, and that their children are learning about healthy life styles and the importance of a good diet and regular physical activity.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Windy Arbor to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school. The inspection team received 70 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 261 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	42	60	27	39	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	34	49	36	51	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	29	41	39	56	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	37	53	30	43	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	38	54	31	44	0	0	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	39	41	59	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	34	49	34	49	2	3	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	27	40	36	53	3	4	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	30	43	38	54	2	3	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	23	33	41	59	4	6	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	25	36	40	58	2	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	44	37	53	1	1	1	1
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	26	50	26	50	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
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.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
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.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
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.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



26 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Windy Arbor School, Chelmsley Wood, Birmingham B37 6RN

It was lovely for me and my colleagues to meet and talk with you when we visited your school. Thank you for making us so welcome. We found the school to be a good school. We especially liked:

- the good progress you make in reading, mathematics and in science
- the way the school looks after you so that you feel safe and comfortable and it is easy for you to make friends with each other
- your good behaviour and the good way in which you work hard in your lessons
- the way in which your adults at home are being encouraged to help you in your learning and in the way you are growing up
- the good way in which the school's leaders are working hard to make it a better place for you to learn.

There are a few things I have asked to be made even better. I am certain you can do as well in other subjects, including writing, as you are doing in reading, mathematics and science. To help you to do this, I would like your teachers to plan lessons more carefully so that you do not find the work they give you either too hard or too easy. I would also like the leaders of each of the different subjects to have better plans for your learning. You can help as well, by continuing to behave well in your lessons and by always trying to do your best.

Thank you again for being so welcoming and I will always have pleasant memories of my time with you.

Yours sincerely

Alan Dobbins

Lead Inspector

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