

Woodhall Primary School

Inspection report

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|--------------------------------|------------------|
| Unique Reference Number | 117194 |
| Local Authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 338965 |
| Inspection dates | 29–30 April 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Selwyn Ward |

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

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|--|---|
| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 3–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 200 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Mr Roy Millard |
| Headteacher | Mrs Lesley Spence |
| Date of previous school inspection | 19 September 2006 |
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors visited 14 lessons and observed nine teachers. They held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils, and spoke with parents. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work, the analysis of the tracking of pupils' progress, school policies and procedures, school leaders' and the local authority's monitoring records, school improvement planning, risk assessments and the questionnaires received from pupils, staff and 68 parents and carers.

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

- the impact on attainment of high mobility and absence rates, and of measures taken to improve attendance
- how well the school caters for the range of different capabilities and needs in each class.

Information about the school

The school is smaller than average. The large majority of pupils are White British. Around 15% of the pupils come from a range of different minority ethnic backgrounds, including a number who are learning English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is high. Mobility is also high, with an above average proportion of pupils joining and leaving the school partway through their primary education. The school includes a Nursery which operates in the mornings only. It also incorporates the Acorn Group. This is a nurture group which takes up to 12 Reception and Key Stage 1 children, from this and other local schools, who have difficulty adjusting to school life. Woodhall has earned Activemark and Healthy Schools awards.

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

This school has come a long way since the time of the last inspection. Standards have risen in both key stages, bringing pupils' attainment in line with the national average. This represents good achievement, given pupils' generally low starting points when they join the school either in the Early Years Foundation Stage or partway through their primary education. Woodhall is a good school. At the core of its success is leaders' creation of a calm but nonetheless stimulating environment where pupils are well motivated and keen to learn.

Rewards and sanctions systems are consistently applied and this has resulted in good behaviour throughout the school, even among those pupils who initially have to master self-control. Pupils, including those from different backgrounds, get on very well together in this friendly, harmonious community. Throughout the school, pupils treat each other with kindness and respect. They listen well in lessons, both to their teachers and to each other. In a Year 3 personal and social development lesson, for example, pupils strained forward to hear each other's contributions, even when classmates were very softly spoken. Pupils especially enjoy activities where they can see a practical application. This means that they make the best progress in lessons where, for example, they have to solve real-life problems in mathematics or where they are asked to complete writing tasks with a specific purpose. The school is developing creative links between different subjects to provide more opportunities of this type, but leaders have correctly identified that pupils are not always given written tasks that are sufficiently interesting and relevant.

Parents are very appreciative of all that the school provides. They especially value the way in which staff look after their children in what they typically describe as 'a caring, understanding and encouraging school'. As one parent explained, 'My child is very happy at Woodhall, and we are happy that our child is learning the importance of working hard at education, and is also being taught respect for other people.' Parents also comment on how enthusiastic their children are about school. A parent of a child who transferred to Woodhall after struggling at another school referred to her son as 'a changed boy': 'He is happy and learning well. His attendance is excellent: no more faked illnesses, he wants to go to school!' Nevertheless, despite pupils' enthusiasm, attendance remains below average. The school makes strenuous efforts to chase up unexplained absences, including through telephoning and texting parents. These have resulted in some improvement, and a sharp reduction in the number of pupils with persistent absence, but there are still too many pupils missing school because they are taken on holiday in term time.

A notable strength of provision at Woodhall is the care taken by teachers to keep a track

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of how well each pupil is doing and to tailor activities in lessons to the wide range of abilities in each class. Initiatives such as 'Big Writing' have helped to extend pupils' vocabulary and the creativity of their writing, but pupils' written work is frequently let down by careless spelling errors. Inspectors saw few examples of pupils referring in lessons to dictionaries or to 'word bank' books that set out key spellings. They are not routinely expected to take responsibility to check their work.

The headteacher, leadership team and governors have an overly modest view of their school's effectiveness, but they have a nonetheless accurate view of the school's strengths and of the areas for development. Their success in improving the quality of provision and in significantly raising standards demonstrates the school's good capacity for continued improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance rates so that these are at least in line with the national average by:
 - further discouraging parents from taking their children out of school for holidays in term time
 - continually stressing to parents the importance of regular attendance
 - publicising examples where pupils with good attendance achieve especially well.
- Further raise attainment and, in particular, pupils' writing by:
 - ensuring that all pupils routinely use dictionaries and word banks, and take the time to check their spellings
 - developing the creative links between subjects to give a practical application to writing tasks and make them relevant to the pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils' key skills, particularly in literacy and numeracy, give them sound preparation for the next stage of their education. There has been sharp year-on-year improvement in standards in Key Stage 1. At the time of the last inspection, attainment at the end of Year 2 was the equivalent of more than a year behind that attained nationally. It is now average in reading, writing and mathematics. Although there has been some fluctuation from year to year in the Year 6 test results, the trend has been upwards too in Key Stage 2, with pupils attaining average standards in English and mathematics in 2009. This represents good achievement, especially considering that half of this group of pupils had special educational needs and/or disabilities. Inspectors found a picture of similarly good progress in lessons seen during the inspection and from sampling pupils' work. Pupils of all abilities make good progress because work is appropriately tailored to their individual learning needs. Able pupils are challenged to extend themselves and pupils learning English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are helped to make good progress because they benefit from good support. Pupils' progress is especially notable in English and mathematics, given

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their low starting points in these subject areas.

Pupils make good progress in their personal as well as their academic development. One parent commented: 'The school has helped my daughter so much with her confidence.' Pupils look out for each other and are proud to take on responsibilities as 'play buddies', mediators and 'singing playground' leaders organising activity songs during the lunchbreak. They have a good understanding of the need for regular exercise and a healthy diet, and they feel safe and secure at school because, as a Year 6 pupil explained, 'There is always someone I can talk to about my problems.' Absence rates are certainly not due to any disaffection on the part of the pupils; in the words of a Year 5 pupil, 'We want to come to school every day, even if we are feeling ill!'

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 | 4 |
| The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | 2 |

How effective is the provision?

Some years ago, when standards were much lower, Woodhall was enrolled in the government's Improving Schools Programme. Although no longer formally part of this, the school has continued with the systems introduced as part of the programme to keep a careful track of each child's progress in English and mathematics and to assist pupils,

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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including through one-to-one support, if they fall behind. Tailored provision, including through the Acorn Group's high quality support, ensures that even pupils with complex needs and those with troubled backgrounds are helped to settle into school routines and so make increasingly rapid progress in their learning.

In their questionnaire responses, many of the pupils commented on how much they love their teachers. Teachers and support staff certainly know their pupils well and the good relationships that they have with them help to motivate the pupils to try hard and do their best. Pupils are also motivated by the topic work that links subjects together. Year 5 pupils, for example, beginning a cycle of work themed around Ancient Greece, have eagerly recorded, at the start of the topic, the questions to which they would like to find the answers. In this way, they are given a say in what they are learning. Throughout the school, teachers succeed in establishing settled classrooms where pupils follow orderly routines. Objectives are set out for each lesson so that pupils know what they should be learning. Teachers' questioning ensures that they pinpoint any misunderstandings and home in on correcting misconceptions. As a result, pupils build steadily on what they have learnt before. The tailored provision in lessons, coupled with well-targeted support from teaching assistants, helps to reduce the potentially negative impact on learning of absences and of pupils joining the school in different year groups or partway through the year. In most instances, teachers' marking gives pupils clear guidance on how to move their work on. A notable feature is the way in which pupils are encouraged to enter into a genuine dialogue with their teachers by responding to the queries posed by teachers when they mark pupils' work.

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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of care, guidance and support | 2 |

How effective are leadership and management?

The many improvements since the last inspection show the impact of leaders' and governors' drive and ambition for success. Leaders' monitoring of lessons is firmly focused on the progress made by the pupils. Teachers have readily taken on board the feedback they have been given, and the results are evident in increasingly consistent practice and more lessons where pupils make good progress. For example, the match of work to ability was picked out as an area for improvement in leaders' monitoring at the start of the year, and this has been transformed into a strength of teaching, evident not just from the lessons seen during the inspection but also from comparing pupils' books over the past year.

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Governors are supportive but also challenge leaders, for example by probing the impact of initiatives introduced to raise standards. They have ensured that safeguarding arrangements meet the latest government requirements and that child protection procedures are robust. They have also tested the impact of the school's arrangements for promoting community cohesion, for example by quizzing pupils on what they know about life in other countries around the world. Although the school has plans for expanding pupils' horizons further, by building a partnership with a school in another part of the United Kingdom, pupils already have a wider world view, including through correspondence with their counterparts in a school in the United States. Visits and visitors to the school have also broadened pupils' understanding of different beliefs, such as their celebration earlier this school year of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. The respect which pupils show to each other, including those from backgrounds different to their own, demonstrates pupils' appreciation of diversity as well as equality. It is indicative of a school community where there is no hint of discrimination or intolerance.

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 | 2 |
| The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers | 2 |
| The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination | 2 |
| The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion | 2 |
| The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money | 2 |

Early Years Foundation Stage

Staff have drawn well on advice from the local authority to improve provision in Nursery and Reception. The outside area has recently been extended, for example, to provide a facility where children thoroughly enjoy a wide range of exciting learning opportunities from digging holes and riding bikes to making a close examination of the bugs that they find. Like the rooms inside, the outside area now caters for all of the Early Years Foundation Stage areas of learning. Writing and drawing form a natural part of play, and children were seen choosing to draw maps of the 'treasure' that had been hidden in the

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sand tray.

Although they enter Year 1 with skills that are below those expected for their ages, this represents good progress in relation to the children's low starting points in both Nursery and Reception. Children's progress in this well run provision is due in no small part to the staff's good knowledge of the needs of the children. The children clearly enjoy all the experiences offered to them and, by the end of the Reception Year, demonstrate good skills of perseverance and concentration. Their speaking and listening skills are initially very low and the staff take every opportunity to encourage the children to talk about what they are doing and how they feel. They even tackle moral dilemmas. For example, during the inspection, and having read Jack and Beanstalk, the youngest children were trying to decide if it was a good or bad thing that Jack stole the Giant's golden eggs.

The adults make continual assessments of children's progress, both through formal and informal observations. Activities are regularly evaluated and this, along with their knowledge of the children's needs and interests, influences future planning. The notes of children's progress and the next steps identified for their learning are not, however, routinely logged in the children's individual records. This means that the information is not always as readily available as it could be for parents.

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 are highly appreciative of all that the school provides, expressing positive views about every key aspect of the school. Nevertheless, some would like more notice of events and activities. Although pleased with the consultation evenings in October and February, several parents indicated that they would also like an additional consultation evening in the summer term, particularly to guide learning over the summer holidays. Inspectors agree with parents' very positive views about all that the school does to involve them and keep them well informed, but they have asked the headteacher and governors to consider these constructive suggestions for further improvements.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodhall Primary School 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 68 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 200 pupils registered at the school.

| Statements | Strongly Agree | | Agree | | Disagree | | Strongly disagree | |
|---|----------------|----|-------|----|----------|---|-------------------|---|
| | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % | Total | % |
| My child enjoys school | 37 | 54 | 30 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school keeps my child safe | 48 | 71 | 20 | 29 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school informs me about my child's progress | 38 | 56 | 28 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making enough progress at this school | 37 | 54 | 30 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The teaching is good at this school | 43 | 63 | 24 | 35 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps me to support my child's learning | 39 | 58 | 27 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle | 37 | 54 | 30 | 44 | 1 | 1 | 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) | 31 | 46 | 33 | 49 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school meets my child's particular needs | 39 | 57 | 28 | 41 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour | 31 | 46 | 30 | 44 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns | 27 | 40 | 40 | 59 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is led and managed effectively | 41 | 60 | 25 | 37 | 2 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school | 43 | 63 | 25 | 37 | 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

| Type of school | Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools) | | | |
|----------------------|---|------|--------------|------------|
| | Outstanding | Good | Satisfactory | Inadequate |
| Nursery schools | 51 | 45 | 0 | 4 |
| Primary schools | 6 | 41 | 42 | 10 |
| Secondary schools | 8 | 34 | 44 | 14 |
| Sixth forms | 10 | 37 | 50 | 3 |
| Special schools | 32 | 38 | 25 | 5 |
| Pupil referral units | 12 | 43 | 31 | 14 |
| All schools | 9 | 40 | 40 | 10 |

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 is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

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.



4 May 2010

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodhall Primary School, Watford, WD19 6QX

Thank you for making us so welcome when we came to visit your school. Many of you and your parents told us that Woodhall is a good school. You are right! It is a school where your teachers help you to make good progress from the start of the Nursery and Reception Years to the end of Year 6. Those of you who join the school at other times do well too. This is because staff look after you well and help you to settle in to learn. We were pleased to see how well behaved you all are and how well everyone gets on together; that helps to make Woodhall such a happy, friendly place to be. You really enjoy lessons, especially when you have practical tasks to do. The 'Big Writing' sessions have improved your written work but we believe that you could improve this even more. You could really help by always using dictionaries and 'word banks' and taking the time to check your work.

In a school where so much is good, the one feature that stands out as lower than it should be is your attendance. Many of you told us how much you like coming to school. Despite this, too many of you miss out on valuable schooling because of holidays in term time. We have asked the school to stress even more to your parents the importance of regular attendance so that you all achieve the very best that you can.

Thank you again for being so helpful to us on our visit, and our very best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Selwyn Ward

Lead inspector

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