

Windhill Primary and Nursery School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	134682
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	341497
Inspection dates	16–17 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Paul Canham

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	256
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Darker
Headteacher	Stephen Clark
Date of previous school inspection	1 March 2007
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 10 lessons, held meetings with governors, staff and a group of pupils, and talked with pupils in lessons. They observed the school's work and that in the children's centre, and looked at a range of documentation, including assessment and attendance information, lesson plans, safeguarding arrangements, school development planning, governing body minutes and pupils' work. Inspectors also scrutinised the 69 questionnaires received from parents and carers, as well as those from staff and a sample of pupils.

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

- the impact of systematic monitoring, higher expectations, and the broad curriculum on tackling variation in learning and raising attainment
- how successfully the school promotes pupils' experience and appreciation of cultures and faiths other than their own in this country and beyond
- the influence of collective leadership and the governing body on the school's direction and performance.

Information about the school

The large majority of pupils are from families of White British heritage. Just over 25% of the pupils speak English as an additional language and almost all of these are at the early stages of learning English. Seventeen languages are spoken and after English, Polish is the main language, followed by Portuguese. The proportion of pupils who arrive at or leave the school at other than the expected times is above that found in most other schools. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is average, but is particularly high in some year groups where proportions are between 30% and 40%.

Among its awards the school has gained the Activemark.

There is a children's centre within the school for parents and their children aged under five. This is managed by the governors and was included in the inspection. There is also an out-of-school care provision for children aged from three to 11 years, but this is not managed by the governors and was not inspected.

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?**3****The school's capacity for sustained improvement****3**

Main findings

The school's collective leadership, with support from staff and governors, has set its sights firmly on sustaining the increased rate of pupil progress and the recent rise in attainment. Resourceful and innovative leadership is reflected in the commitment shown by staff and governors, who work with determination to gain the best provision and outcomes for pupils and families. This is evident in their accurate evaluation of where the school is at present and of the improvements needed.

Knowledgeable and committed governors work closely with the school but they have yet to develop the skills to challenge the school and hold it to account for tackling weaknesses and improving outcomes. The school is securely placed to bring about improvement and move forward.

The school has several good features. One of these is the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children get a good start to their education. Another is the supportive and harmonious environment which celebrates the increasing cultural diversity of pupils and their families. The close attention given to enhancing pupils' self-esteem and in developing their confidence is reflected in the improved levels of achievement. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the school, although the poor attendance of a small proportion of pupils has a significant impact on the school's overall attendance figures. Children start school with narrow skills and low levels of knowledge and understanding. Recent improvements are such that standards for the majority of pupils have been lifted by Year 6 to broadly average levels in mathematics and science, but well below average in English due to weaknesses in writing. The school is aware of the need to give pupils, and particularly the more able, increased opportunities to write for different purposes and to practise their mathematical skills in a range of contexts. The overall picture of the school's standards is skewed by the attainment reached by the significant proportion of pupils who join the school between Years 1 and 6. Despite the good progress made by these pupils, many of whom are at the early stages of learning English as an additional language, the gaps in learning resulting from disruptions to their schooling are difficult to fill.

The school knows that the quality of teaching and learning is at the core of improved performance. The quest for high quality teaching is evident in the continual review of classroom practice based upon close monitoring by school leaders. Consequently, pupils are progressing well in lessons that, typically, are interesting and well paced. Pupils' strong personal outcomes can be seen in their good behaviour, interest and enjoyment of learning. Clubs and performance activities are popular and provide pupils with good opportunities to develop their confidence, creative and performance skills. The school

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has good links with the children's centre, outside agencies and the community.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve attendance and by July 2010 meet local authority targets by strengthening the partnership with those parents whose children do not attend often enough, and sharing termly attendance information with them.
 - Accelerate progress and raise attainment in English and mathematics, particularly for the more able by:
 - including a wider range of challenging activities when planning for cross-curricular themes and subjects
 - providing more opportunities to write for different purposes from the time pupils join school
 - planning more opportunities for pupils' to practise and apply basic mathematical skills in a range of contexts.
 - Strengthen the monitoring role of governors so that they are more rigorous in holding leaders to account for tackling weaknesses and improving outcomes.
- About 40% of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

3

There are clear signs that the school's determined efforts are making a substantial difference, resulting in pupils' good progress. Pupils' enjoyment in learning, as seen in their eagerness and participation in English, mathematics and physical education are characteristic of lessons and indicate the quickening pace of learning across the school. Pupils work well in small groups and independently from the teacher, and show determination in getting the tasks right.

While all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress, attainment remains below average on entry to Year 1. Standards, as indicated by the results of national tests and assessments, fell between 2006 and 2008 to well below national averages at the end of Year 2. However, this decline was arrested in 2009 with a sharp rise in standards with strengths in reading and mathematics. By the end of Year 6, standards of the large majority of pupils are broadly average in mathematics and science but well below average in English, with particular weaknesses in writing. The variation in attainment between 2006 and 2008 has been addressed with a pronounced rise in standards in 2009 with substantially more pupils reaching the higher level 5 in both reading and mathematics. These standards are continuing to improve strongly. The school almost met its challenging but realistic targets for mathematics in 2009. There are no significant differences between the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those with English as an additional Language.

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Pupils say they like coming to school because teachers are supportive and the work interesting. However, attendance is low because a small but significant proportion of families return to their country of birth for extended periods. Pupils with English as an additional language report that they are made to feel welcome and enjoy participating in clubs. Pupils report no bullying and show good levels of understanding about personal safety. There is also much enjoyment of music, physical activities and art and positive responses to literature. All these qualities contribute to the caring and supportive school community.

Pupils' considerate behaviour is a strong factor in their successful learning. They readily take on responsibilities to help the school run smoothly. The pupil forums provide good opportunities for pupils to represent the views of others. Responsibilities that are integral to being monitors help develop leadership skills that are important qualities for when they leave school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	4
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	3
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?

Strengths of teaching lie in the pace, the range of teaching methods, and the

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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well-chosen tasks that provide the right levels of challenge for all pupils. These features are boosted by the collaborative approach taken by teachers and their assistants who work effectively in teams and provide well-targeted support. Topics, such as those that probe pupils' thinking, encourage creativity. Imaginative writing for such topics successfully captures pupils' interest and holds their attention. Consequently, pupils willingly become involved in their learning and cover a lot of valuable ground. Assessment information is often used well to identify appropriate levels of approach, although, occasionally, introductions are rather long and more able pupils are not always challenged early enough. Marking is supportive but it does not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve.

Good quality displays give an insight into the breadth of the curriculum that successfully links subjects such as history, geography and English. The curriculum provides good opportunities for the development of performance and creative skills in subjects such as physical education, music and art. The teaching of French adds a further positive dimension. Although the school has been successful in raising standards in reading and mathematics, it is fully aware of the need to plan consistently for the ability range and give greater prominence to writing and the use of mathematical skills in indifferent contexts. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) supports pupils' work by giving them access to a range of resources. Pupils' experiences are enriched by trips locally and beyond including a residential trip for Year 6 pupils. The school's effective programme of personal, social and health education also gives pupils many opportunities to develop confidence and help make well-informed choices.

The good support for pupils' personal development and pastoral care is recognised and valued by parents. One parent's comments illustrated a particular strength: 'My daughter has been fully accepted into this school after I moved her from a different one...a lovely and friendly place to be.' Good links with the children's centre help to ensure a smooth transition between home and the school. Attention to pupils' health and well-being is reflected, not just in opportunities for physical activity, but also in the provision of healthy school meals. Individualised programmes of support are drawn up for the school's vulnerable pupils. Individual achievement is effectively managed through comprehensive tracking of attainment and progress. Evaluations lead to focused intervention such as those used in the nurture group, which skilfully build pupils' confidence. However, the steps taken by the school to encourage regular attendance have had a limited impact.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

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How effective are leadership and management?

The school's leadership team, well supported by staff and governors, has a clear and accurate view of the school's strengths and what is needed to remedy weaknesses.

Systems are established and challenging targets are set for the school's work. School improvement planning is well focused on key priorities, although documents do not provide sufficient detail to help measure the school's progress. However, important outcomes include a more rapid rate of progress than in the past and much improved attainment. The school recognises it has further to go to lift standards to national average levels.

The capacity for moving the school forward and bringing about improvement is satisfactory. Governors are involved in setting appropriate priorities for improvement and they are closely involved in the school's work. However, their efforts have not been sufficiently focused on challenging the school to improve its performance.

Attention to pupils' safety is integral to the school's work and safeguarding procedures are systematic, continually reviewed and firmly established. Local services and agencies are used particularly well to enhance the well-being of vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school promotes equality and tackles any form of discrimination well. Staff and governors have a good knowledge and understanding of the community the school serves and seek the views of parents. The school, including the children's centre, is actively engaged in promoting links with outside agencies and the curriculum is used effectively to increase pupils' understanding of the United Kingdom and global communities. The school recognises that it has yet to develop more formal links with schools in this country and abroad, although it is at an early stage of making contact with a school in Caracas. Parents are given good opportunities to give views on the school, and benefit from regular newsletters and access to the school's website.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2

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The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Good leadership and management ensure that children's needs are identified early and welfare arrangements are strong. Support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and for those who are more vulnerable, is good. The provision, which is very well resourced and organised, makes effective use of the indoor and outside areas which provide a seamless and creative learning environment. In both Nursery and Reception classes, staff work closely together and detailed planning takes good account of the children's low starting points. Adults give closely-targeted support to both teacher initiated activities and those which children choose for themselves.

Children are nurtured from the very start. As a result, they settle quickly and are eager to learn. Relationships are real strengths. Children listen attentively and play together well using a wide range of stimulating activities, although their use of language is often very limited. Well-planned, themed topics ensure all areas of learning are covered, with a particular focus on reading, speaking, listening, writing, and number skills. Children become engrossed in the story telling and imaginative play; they respond well to opportunities to share ideas and resources. Consequently, children, including those at the early stage of learning English, make good progress in all areas of learning.

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

Most parent questionnaires were positive, and some of the written comments expressed considerable satisfaction with the school. These included remarks about their children's enjoyment of school, the welcoming environment and the range extra-curricular activities. A very small minority of parents recorded concerns over several issues, including behaviour and the information received by parents regarding their children's progress. These concerns were not reflected in the very large majority of parents' comments and the inspection found no evidence to support them.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Windhill Primary and Nursery 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 69 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 256 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	44	64	23	33	2	3	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	38	55	31	45	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	28	41	29	42	10	14	1	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	30	43	30	43	4	6	2	3
The teaching is good at this school	30	43	35	51	1	1	1	1
The school helps me to support my child's learning	27	39	33	48	6	9	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	42	36	52	1	1	1	1
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)	18	26	39	57	3	4	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	36	36	52	3	4	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	16	23	40	58	3	4	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	24	35	37	54	4	6	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	31	45	32	46	0	0	2	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	37	54	29	42	0	0	1	1

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

	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
Type of school	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.



18 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Windhill Primary and Nursery School, Bishop's Stortford CM23 2NE

We very much enjoyed our visit to your school and thank you for making us feel so welcome. This letter is to tell you about some of the things we found while we were with you. Yours is a satisfactory school and it is improving rapidly. It is also a school where most of you want to be, make lots of friends, and enjoy taking part in the many interesting and exciting activities. Just about all your parents are happy with the school. You behave well and get on with each other.

Here are some important things about your school.

Those of you in the Nursery and Reception get off to a really good start.

You make good progress in lessons.

You respond well to the good teaching.

You feel safe and secure in school and enjoy your lessons.

Those in charge of the school are making improvements that are helping you to make even faster progress.

All staff take good care of you, and make sure that you know what to do to keep safe.

You have a good understanding of what makes for a healthy lifestyle and healthy eating.

This is what your school has been asked to do to make things even better.

Where attendance is not as good as it should be, work more closely with you and your parents to improve it.

Help you to improve your English and mathematics by giving you more opportunities to write for different reasons and to practise using your mathematical skills as much as possible, especially those of you who are able to learn faster.

Ensure that governors look more closely at how well you and the school are getting on.

We wish each one of you every success in your future education and hope that you continue to enjoy learning as much as you do now.

Yours sincerely

Paul Canham

Lead inspector

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