

# Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique reference number</b>	117171
<b>Local authority</b>	Hertfordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	379365
<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 March 2012
<b>Lead inspector</b>	Richard Blackmore

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	229
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Charles Clark
<b>Headteacher</b>	Eileen King
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	9 January 2007
<b>School address</b>	Rectory Lane Watton-At-Stone Hertford SG14 3SG
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<b>Age group</b>	3–11
<b>Inspection date(s)</b>	20–21 March 2012
<b>Inspection number</b>	379365



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## Introduction

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore

Additional inspector

Sa'ad Khaldi

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by eight teachers, including joint lesson observations and visits to several classes with the headteacher. The inspectors held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body, staff, and pupils. Inspectors took account of the responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at a range of school policies and documentation relating to safeguarding and strategic planning, examples of pupils' work, assessment data and monitoring records. They also scrutinised the 102 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as questionnaires from pupils and staff.

## Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Almost all pupils are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is above average. The school has achieved Investor in People award and Healthy School status. It meets the current floor standards. The school runs a breakfast club at the start of each day and an after-school club, both of which are managed by the governing body. There is a children's centre that is managed by the governing body and is subject to separate inspection.

**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

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Achievement of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Quality of teaching</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Behaviour and safety of pupils</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Leadership and management</b>	<b>2</b>

## Key findings

- This is a good school. Pupils are positive about the school and the opportunities it provides. They enjoy lessons because teachers make learning enjoyable by using a range of resources. The school is not outstanding because teaching is not outstanding and boys' progress in writing at Key Stage 1 is slower than that of the girls.
- Pupils' achievement is good. From starting points in the Nursery class which are typical for their age, they make good progress to attain standards which are above average overall. Progress in reading is very strong at Key Stage 1 but progress is slower in writing, particularly for boys, because there are few opportunities to produce extended writing. Progress in mathematics is good but slower than in English. Those pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.
- Teaching is good. There is much good teaching in both Key Stages 1 and 2 which enthuses pupils and helps them to make rapid progress. In some lessons, work is not well matched to the needs of individual pupils. This is especially so for higher attaining pupils. While there is some very good practice in marking which tells pupils how to improve their work, targets are not discussed with pupils frequently enough in lessons.
- Pupils' behaviour is good and they say they feel safe in school. Their behaviour is very good in those lessons where they are excited by their learning and fully challenged so they have to think very hard. They enjoy school and say that misbehaviour is not common and is effectively dealt with by their teachers.
- Leadership and management are good. Leaders have determinedly and effectively introduced strategies to improve the quality of teaching and which have raised standards to above average and are ensuring swift progress.

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## What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By the start of autumn term 2012, improve the progress of boys in writing at Key Stage 1 by providing more opportunities for pupils to produce extended writing.
- By the end of the summer term 2012, improve the quality of teaching by:
  - setting out at the start and referring throughout lessons to clear targets for pupils, matched to their different abilities
  - ensuring higher attaining pupils are sufficiently challenged.

## Main report

### Achievement of pupils

Children join the Early Years Foundation Stage speaking with confidence and able to write simple words. Children in the nursery and reception classes make good progress as a result of stimulating activities that are well organised, both in the classroom and outside. They make good progress throughout the school so that attainment is above average by the end of Year 6, with pupils the equivalent of a year ahead of their peers nationally. This means that pupils are well prepared for the secondary school curriculum. Pupils' achievement, therefore, is good over their time in school compared with their starting points, particularly in reading. This is the result of well planned and targeted actions such as 'Reading Rascals' in Key Stage 1 and 'Book Club' in Key Stage 2 which promote frequent reading of interesting and varied texts. Standards in reading at the end of Key Stage 1 are above average and at the end of Key Stage 2 are high. However, the progress of boys in writing is slower than for girls in Key Stage 1 because there are not enough opportunities to write at length by themselves.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are identified very early. As a result, early intervention and support enables good and sometimes outstanding progress.

Good progress in lessons was seen during the inspection, particularly in those lessons where teaching was stimulating, clearly focused and offered pupils opportunities to engage with tasks. In all year groups, pupils receive good-quality teaching that uses a wide range of strategies and interesting resources that help to develop their basic skills quickly and sharpen a keen sense of enquiry.

Pupils enjoy learning throughout the school. In the best lessons, there is a tangible atmosphere of excitement and debate. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils hypothesised and challenged one another about the relationship between tenths and hundredths using a 'bead string' (a resource that helps pupils to understand the

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place value of numbers). Pupils apply themselves well to the tasks planned for them. They work well in small groups, discussing and conferring over ways to solve problems. Even when tasks are exceptionally challenging, such as in some literacy lessons, they persevere and do not give up easily. For example, in Year 5, pupils were observed analysing a silent film. As a result of this well chosen resource, pupils spoke with great enthusiasm and emotion, describing the thoughts of the main character after the loss of family members: 'You were my only love' and 'You were the only one who brightened my day.' Most parents and carers responding to the questionnaire agree their children make good progress, including those who have transferred their children from other schools during the course of the school year.

### Quality of teaching

Most parents and carers believe that pupils are taught well and inspection evidence supports this view. In the best lessons, teachers make learning stimulating, explain clearly to pupils what they will learn and how they will know if they have succeeded. Teachers employ interactive whiteboards well to engage pupils, and plan effective opportunities for pupils to learn through practical activities. Teachers frequently make use of a wide range of other resources to motivate and involve pupils. For example, in Year 1, the teacher used a video recording of pupils' previous role play to reinforce writing features of traditional fairytales such as repetition. As a result, pupils talk positively about teaching and enjoy the wide range of subjects. Secure classroom organisation means pupils know what they need to do. This contributes to the good pace of learning.

Teachers use questions well to check what pupils already know and that they have made progress. These questions also strengthen pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in a number of important ways. Spiritually, teachers' questioning enables pupils to reflect on and develop their ideas, and pupils are given the confidence to share their thinking openly. Teachers plan the curriculum well to enable teachers to extend pupils' essential skills, knowledge and understanding at the correct level and across all subjects. However, teachers do not always refer to or highlight how pupils are doing in relation to their individual targets. This limits pupils' understanding of the improvements needed to make their work better. Teachers and teaching assistants interact well with pupils to support them in their learning. There are similarly very positive relationships between staff and pupils in the before-and-after-school club and there is a wide range of activities on offer.

Lessons have a measured pace which helps pupils to consolidate knowledge and assimilate new learning. Pupils, for example in Year 4, were probingly questioned to ascertain what they already knew, were challenged to extend their writing skills and offered time to reflect upon and improve previous work when analysing play scripts. Pupils' work is often shown using visualisers (technology that shows large images of objects). In a Year 2 lesson, pupils' artwork shown in this way fired pupils' enthusiasm to create stunning Aboriginal-style art.

In the small minority of lessons where teaching is less effective, tasks lack challenge

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and expectations are too low for higher attaining pupils. There are times when lessons are too led by teachers, so there is a lack of opportunity for pupils to work independently and, as a result, there is little consolidation of learning.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils listen carefully to their teachers and to each other's contributions in lessons. They behave well in lessons and little time is lost to behaviour management. They work well together, taking turns and showing mutual respect. Pupils are usually polite and follow instructions well. Their good behaviour in lessons makes a clear contribution to the school's positive learning ethos. Pupils say they feel safe and have a generally good understanding of the actions they can take to ensure they remain safe. For example, most pupils recognise how to deal with potential risks associated with the internet. They have a good understanding of the different kinds of bullying and ably articulate how they can be dealt with effectively. Pupils understand what is expected of them and respond well by being polite and courteous to each other and with the adults in school. Attendance is above average and pupils' punctuality to school and to lessons is good.

While the very large majority of parents and carers believe behaviour to be good, a small minority of parents expressed concern with the way the school deals with bullying. The large majority of pupils think behaviour is good in lessons and around school and that the staff deal effectively with bullying. In this inclusive school, staff take considerable time and care to ensure that pupils feel safe. They supervise them closely, managing behaviour well, frequently checking if pupils have any concerns. Pupils of all ages commented on how they feel safe in school. School records confirm that behaviour is good most of the time but there have been very occasional instances of poor behaviour. The headteacher accepts that there have been times when not enough has been done to keep parents and carers fully informed of actions taken by the school on those occasions when incidents occur.

### **Leadership and management**

Leaders and managers critically evaluate the school's performance and are rigorous in searching for reasons if any area of provision does not provide the expected outcomes. The governing body actively supports this strategy and challenges leaders, for example over the reasons for variation in pupils' rates of progress. Its members have been rigorous in establishing comprehensive arrangements that ensure pupils' safeguarding and their health and safety. They visit regularly and so have first-hand knowledge of what happens in school, helping to ensure that safeguarding requirements are fully met.

School leaders use assessment and progress tracking information well to identify where pupils need additional support and this ensures that the best use is made of the additional adults who provide bespoke support. This means that the school promotes equality effectively.

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The curriculum meets pupils' needs well, especially in developing their literacy and numeracy skills so that many pupils with average starting points reach levels of attainment that are well above those expected for their ages. Pupils confirm that the school offers them a good range of extra-curricular activities that help to make school enjoyable and fun. It also provides opportunities for pupils to develop empathy, as well as respect for each other and themselves, and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils learn about diverse cultures through sharing experiences with contrasting schools, including Marakolliya in Sri Lanka. Lessons include good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their feelings and how to interact with others and the world around them.

The school has established partnerships with other schools locally to enable staff to benefit from shared ideas and others' practice. These links also support the well-planned professional development for staff and the transition arrangements as pupils move to their secondary phase of education. The school is active in seeking parents' and carers' participation in the school community. For example, parents helped in classrooms at the time of the inspection as part of 'Mums' Week', when they supported pupils in a range of lessons. They told inspectors they feel welcomed and encouraged to be part of school life.

The school's successful maintenance of above average standards over recent years has been the result of well-planned and carefully considered solutions. This successful approach ensures that there is good capacity for further improvement.



## Glossary

### What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all 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	46	46	8	0
Primary schools	8	47	40	5
Secondary schools	14	38	40	8
Special schools	28	48	20	4
Pupil referral units	15	50	29	5
All schools	11	46	38	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 31 August 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

## Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and 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 governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

**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.**



22 March 2012

Dear Pupils

**Inspection of Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School, Hertford, SG14 3SG**

Thank you for welcoming my colleagues and me so warmly into your school when we visited recently. We enjoyed watching you in lessons and at play, talking about your school with you and your teachers, and looking at your work. This is what we found out.

You go to a good school. It has many strong points.

- You make good progress and your attainment is above average.
- Your reading is very good; many of you told us how much you enjoy books.
- The teachers often give you interesting activities in lessons.
- Your behaviour and personal development are good. You get on well together and you have positive attitudes to learning in lessons.
- You feel you are kept safe.
- Your attendance is good.
- The school provides lots of interesting activities for you to take part in.
- The school is well run. The headteacher leads the school well and knows what to do next to make it better.

There are a few things that would make the school better. I have asked the staff to continue with the work they are doing to make sure that boys in the younger classes make more rapid progress in writing. I have also asked the school to make sure that staff provide those of you who find work easy with tasks that always make you think hard. I have also asked them to use the targets set for you more effectively during lessons. You can help by telling teachers whenever you find work too easy and by doing your best to achieve your targets.

It was a pleasure to meet you and I wish all of you the very best.

Yours sincerely

Richard Blackmore  
Lead inspector

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