

Woolenwick Junior School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	117322
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	379393
Inspection dates	2–3 May 2012
Lead inspector	Michael Sheridan HMI

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	214
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Shadbolt
Headteacher	Mike Crabtree
Date of previous school inspection	11 February 2009
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Age group	7-11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Michael Sheridan

Her Majesty's Inspector

David Lewis

Additional Inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. Inspectors observed learning in 14 lessons taught by eight teachers. Inspectors also observed learning in 14 small groups, led by teachers or teaching assistants. Meetings were held with school leaders, teachers, Inclusion Co-ordinator, members of the governing body, pupils, and the family support worker. Inspectors took account of the responses to the on-line Parent View survey in planning the inspection, observed the school's work, and looked at school improvement planning, tracking data, attendance data, and work in pupils' books. Inspectors considered the views of pupils, staff, and 119 parents and carers as expressed through returned questionnaires.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized junior school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational need is above average. The school shares a site with an infant school, a children's centre and a privately run nursery. All of these are subject to separate inspections. The school has a number of awards and accreditations, including the Inclusion Quality Mark and Hertfordshire anti-bullying accreditation. The school does not currently meet government floor standards.

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	3
Achievement of pupils	3
Quality of teaching	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- This is a satisfactory and improving school. Standards of attainment in recent years have been low. Improvements in the quality of teaching mean that these are rising throughout the school. The school is not yet good because there remain some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and there is a legacy of underachievement that the current Year 6 are unlikely to overcome fully, despite their good progress. Schools whose overall effectiveness is judged as satisfactory may receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.
- Achievement for most groups of pupils is satisfactory and improving. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress because they get effective, targeted intervention. Pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to exceed floor standards and reach standards of attainment that are close to the national average. The current Year 5 will enter Year 6 in a stronger position to previous years having made satisfactory and sometimes good progress from their broadly average starting points.
- The management of performance of teaching is having a very positive impact on improving the quality of education provided. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and an increasing proportion is good. There are several inconsistencies that result in teaching being satisfactory and prevent provision being consistently good or better. Systems to share information about pupils' performance in class and group sessions are not always sharp enough.
- Leaders and the governing body demonstrate clear ambition and are driving improvement effectively. They have accurately evaluated the effectiveness of the school and taken action to ensure sustained and successful improvement in pupils' achievement, without compromising the school's deservedly positive reputation for pastoral care and the inclusion of those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable.
- Pupils' behaviour is typically good and so are their attitudes to learning. Robust systems are in place to promote increasingly positive attitudes to school, especially for those with challenging behaviour, including those who have been excluded from other schools. Systems for ensuring pupils' remain safe meet requirements and are effective.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Develop the quality of teaching so it leads to pupils making consistently good or better progress by:
 - ensuring marking and verbal feedback consistently inform pupils about how they can improve their work
 - developing the use of questioning by teachers so they deepen pupils' understanding consistently by challenging them to think deeply
 - making sure that all work is matched well to the different needs of individuals in every class
 - developing systems for teachers and teaching assistants to share information about the progress pupils make and the content of small group sessions, so that links are made between these sessions and whole class sessions, enabling pupils to practise and develop their emerging knowledge and skills further.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most parents and carers think that their children are making good progress. Inspectors judge that all groups of pupils are making at least satisfactory progress, with many making accelerated progress to overcome previous underachievement. From broadly average starting points, pupils are on track to reach standards of attainment that are near to average in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of this academic year. Reading is promoted well throughout the curriculum and pupils read regularly for learning purposes or pleasure. Pupils who enter the school below the expected levels in reading receive effective additional support. It includes regular sessions to develop their understanding of the sounds that letters make. Pupils enjoy their learning a great deal and work hard to be successful. In good lessons, pupils make very strong gains because the work is matched carefully to their specific needs and abilities. In satisfactory lessons, the progress that pupils make is more variable because the activities and guidance that is provided are not always matched sufficiently well to pupils' capabilities. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making good progress as a result of the well-organised and targeted intervention and support that they receive. Pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties are supported effectively in class, so they make gains in line with their ability. There are some differences in attainment levels between boys and girls in different year groups. While there is no overall pattern to that, the school is active in analysing the reasons and takes effective action to close learning gaps and eradicate underachievement.

Quality of teaching

Teaching is satisfactory overall, with much that is good or improving. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very strong and result in a very positive learning environment where pupils work hard and try to please. Most parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire said that they felt their children were

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taught well. Teachers and teaching assistants have worked hard to improve their practice successfully and this has led to standards of attainment rising and the number of good lessons increasing.

While many of the lessons seen by inspectors were good, the impact of teaching over time remains satisfactory because of some inconsistency in several important areas. In the good lessons observed, teachers used questions very skilfully to encourage pupils to think deeply. In one Year 4 lesson, the teacher designed the questions carefully to make sure that all pupils developed their understanding of how to solve problems involving fractions. In that lesson, the teacher gave just enough information so that pupils were able to work out answers for themselves. The lesson was particularly successful because the teacher knew pupils' strengths very well and used this to match the level of challenge appropriately. However, not all teachers use questions to explore new concepts with pupils in that way and, as a consequence, pupils' understanding is not always consolidated or extended sufficiently.

In good lessons, work is matched carefully to individuals' and groups' needs so they are developing skills at the appropriate level. In such lessons, teachers support pupils effectively with necessary guidance and feedback that enables them to improve their work quickly. In satisfactory lessons, while teachers offer guidance and encouragement, work is matched to the wide range of needs less well and, as a result, not all pupils make the same rapid progress. In such lessons, marking is less helpful because it is not always focused sharply enough on how pupils can improve their work.

The school recognised the need to provide pupils with additional opportunities to fill gaps in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Accurate data about pupils' achievement is collected and used effectively to develop a very good range of effective interventions, particularly through small group sessions. All pupils take part in these daily small group sessions, with some being designed to extend more-able pupils' understanding further. Inspectors observed a wide range of activities in which pupils were working hard to secure new knowledge and which help to develop strategies to support their reading, writing and numeracy development. While small group sessions are useful in providing precisely focused learning opportunities, they do not always contribute as well as they could to accelerating learning rapidly because class teachers do not always know what is being covered in these sessions. As a result, teachers are unable to make links with these sessions in their lessons and, as a consequence, miss opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning.

Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to ensure disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are supported effectively in class. Teaching assistants work closely with teachers in most classes and regularly discuss exactly what individual pupils need to learn. Many teaching assistants are skilled at providing appropriate support so pupils are able to access the curriculum fully. The level of support, along with increasingly strong teaching and additional targeted small group work, means that those pupils are often making good progress.

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Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most pupils, parents and carers report that behaviour and safety are good. The inspection evidence indicates that they are right. Behaviour in classes and around school is typically good. The school has robust systems to ensure pupils stay safe. There are some pupils who demonstrate challenging behaviour. Inspection evidence shows that such behaviour is managed well and improves over time. Those whose circumstances make them potentially vulnerable are supported exceptionally well and, as a result, their behaviour and attitude to learning improves. A small number of parents and carers expressed concern about the time taken to deal with incidents of bullying. Discussion with pupils and a scrutiny of the school's records show that bullying and racism are rare and pupils feel that, when concerns arise, they are managed effectively and promptly. The school is active in challenging discrimination. For example, the school was quick to tackle the use of homophobic language by a small number of pupils. Teachers worked together to identify the concern, challenge it and monitor the effectiveness of their actions on the behaviour and attitude of pupils. There is clarity of purpose shared by all staff that leads to the school's positive and deserved reputation for inclusion, promoting good personal development and effective pastoral care. There is a tangible respect between pupils and adults in school. As a result, pupils work hard in lessons and try to please. That is enhanced by the fact that they enjoy their learning and adults work hard to provide a range of interesting activities within the curriculum. Attendance has improved and is now above average. Pupils are punctual, move between different lessons quickly and relish the responsibilities that they are given.

Leadership and management

Leaders have been conspicuously successful in raising standards of attainment and accelerating pupils' progress. Leaders have recognised the need to improve the quality of academic provision to match that found for pastoral care. The senior leadership team complement each other with a well-balanced set of skills and strengths. Senior leaders challenge and motivate each other to continue to improve, while maintaining the school's core values of equality and inclusion. Professional development has been successful in improving teachers' skills. Performance management is effective in holding staff to account and providing bespoke training and support. Almost all staff say that leaders do all that they can to improve teaching. There is a culture of continuing improvement and teachers are conscientiously engaged in their own professional development. Leaders, including the governing body, have a clear understanding of the strengths and continuing areas to develop. Their plans for further improvement are robust and the overwhelming support they receive from staff puts the school in a strong position to improve.

The curriculum is good. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning and are making accelerated progress in reading, writing, and numeracy. The curriculum is rich in experiences that enable pupils to think deeply about issues and appreciate the wider world. Pupils are given additional responsibilities that allow them to develop and demonstrate their personal skills. The curriculum, very strong pastoral care, and positive relationships all lead to an environment where pupils' spiritual, moral, social,

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and cultural development is promoted effectively.

Equality of opportunity is promoted effectively. Leaders identify where groups of pupils underperform and take decisive action to close any gaps, for example, between boys and girls performance. Pupils get along noticeably well together and discriminatory behaviour is not tolerated by adults or pupils.

Systems for keeping pupils safe are robust. All systems are evaluated routinely and actions taken, for example, to improve the security of the grounds, has been successful.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	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 to 31 December 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).

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.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
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.

4 May 2012

Dear Pupils



Inspection of Woolenwick Junior School, Stevenage, SG1 2NU.

You may remember that I inspected your school recently with another inspector. This letter is to let you know our findings.

We judge that you go to a satisfactory school. We found that your school is improving. We saw that quite a lot of your lessons are good and we have asked your school to make sure all lessons are good. To do this, we have asked teachers to ensure tasks are suitably challenging and work is always pitched at the right level and the guidance and feedback you receive helps you to improve. Some of your teachers are very good at asking you questions that make you think hard. We have asked that all teachers learn how to do this. I know your teachers are already working on these things. You can help them by working hard, answering questions and taking notice of the guidance they give you to improve your work.

We enjoyed watching you learn in small groups for short periods. We saw that this work was just what you needed to help you improve your reading, writing and numeracy. However, we also noticed that sometimes you would return to your class and complete work that was similar to the work you had been doing in these small groups. Because your teachers do not always know what you have been learning about in these groups, they were unable to help you make the links between the two pieces of work. We have asked that your teachers know what you have been learning about when you are not in class so they can talk about this with you in whole-class lessons and help you to develop your learning and improve your skills further. You could help them by thinking about what you have been learning about and trying to use your skills in all the tasks you complete.

I would like to finish by saying thank you to all of you who we talked to. Your views have been very helpful to us when making our judgements. Inspectors found you all to be polite and friendly. Your views were sensible and we enjoyed hearing about all that you enjoy in school. You have my best wishes for the future.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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