

Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School

Rectory Lane, Watton-at-Stone, Hertford, SG14 3SG

Inspection dates 25–26 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Pupils, especially the most able, do not make good progress in Years 1 to 6 in writing and mathematics. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 do not make good progress in reading.
- Teaching over time has not expected enough of pupils in Key Stage 2, especially with respect to the quality of their written work. The work given to the most able pupils is often too easy for them.
- Teachers' guidance for pupils on how to improve their work is not contributing to rapid improvements in quality. Teachers do not routinely expect pupils to respond to the guidance they are given.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's work is too generous. Their checks on teaching are not rigorous or timely enough to secure rapid improvements in quality.
- The governing body has not held the school to account robustly enough for pupils' achievement over time. They have not analysed and evaluated the school's performance sufficiently for themselves.
- Leaders are not ensuring that the curriculum is fully covered in subjects such as geography and history.

The school has the following strengths

- School leaders have made significant improvements to the early years. Effective leadership and good teaching enable children to achieve well.
- The teaching of phonics (the knowledge of sounds and letters) in Year 1 is good, so pupils reach above-average standards.
- Pupils make good progress in reading in Years 1 and 2.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because of the good support they receive. The gap in attainment has now closed for these pupils. Senior leaders and governors monitor the impact of this support well.
- Behaviour is good. There are no exclusions. Procedures to keep pupils safe are secure.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 18 lessons, nine of which were seen jointly with senior leaders.
- Inspectors looked closely at pupils’ written work for the current school year. They listened to some pupils read.
- Meetings were held with a group of pupils, three governors, and a representative from the local authority and the school’s senior and subject leaders.
- Inspectors took account of the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire and the 58 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a range of its documents, including, plans for improvement and records of checks on the quality of teaching. They also considered records of meetings of the governing body and those relating to behaviour, attendance, safeguarding and the systems used to check pupils’ progress.

Inspection team

George Logan, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Simon Harbrow	Additional Inspector
Vreta Bagilhole	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an average-sized primary school.
- Almost all pupils are White British.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is below the national average. The pupil premium is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are in the care of the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- In the early years, all Nursery children attend either a morning or an afternoon session each day, while Reception children all attend full time.
- The school offers breakfast and after-school care clubs. These are managed by the governing body and formed part of the current inspection.
- A new leader of the early years was appointed two terms ago.
- There is a children's centre adjacent to the school. This is part of a group of three children's centres which have, since April 2015, been managed under contract by the governing body of this school. The school plans to provide education for children from two years of age from September 2015. The children's centre is subject to a separate inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching so that it leads to improved achievement across the school and higher standards by the end of Year 6, by ensuring that:
 - teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and set work that is always challenging, particularly for the most-able pupils
 - pupils' written work is of a consistently high standard
 - teachers' marking is consistently thorough, providing pupils with clear guidance as to how they should improve their work
 - pupils act upon the comments made in teachers' marking and so improve their work.
- Improve the impact of leaders and governors by ensuring that:
 - the monitoring of teaching is more frequent and rigorous
 - their evaluation of the school's performance is more accurate
 - a culture of higher expectations for pupils' achievement is established
 - the curriculum includes all the required content of the National Curriculum
 - the governing body holds the school to account more robustly for pupils' achievement over time.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders' evaluations of the school's performance are too generous and the monitoring of teaching lacks rigour. Some evaluations of the quality of teaching provided by individual teachers are too generous. Leaders do not check the quality of teaching in classrooms often enough to gain a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. Where leaders identify weaknesses, they do not always check to make sure that improvements are made. Leaders have, however, taken resolute action to tackle inadequate teaching.
- Standards have been average for several years and have shown little improvement. The leadership team has not in the past communicated sufficiently high expectations to teachers of what pupils should achieve. However, improvements are being made in the current year, particularly in early years provision.
- The procedures for setting targets for teachers are securely linked to salary progression. Good professional development opportunities now exist to improve teaching and learning. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning as teachers' skills are improved.
- Subject leaders are effective. They recognise that improvements are needed and have taken actions to implement and monitor the impact of them. For example, better monitoring of pupils' achievement has contributed to better progress in mathematics in the current year.
- The curriculum requires improvement. In the current school year, the school has implemented the new National Curriculum and introduced a new assessment system. The school is now evaluating the quality of learning across all subjects. At this point, some unevenness is evident. Achievement in some areas, for example, mathematics is improving. However the volume of work is lower in some subjects, such as history and geography, than in others and does not meet the full requirements, leading to pupils making slower progress.
- The evaluation of the impact of pupil premium expenditure is thorough. School leaders are effective in tracking the progress of these pupils and ensuring that they catch up with their peers.
- Additional funding to extend pupils' opportunities in sport is used well to improve training and to provide specialist teaching. More pupils are now directly involved in sporting clubs at lunchtime and in competitive sporting activities. Standards in physical education are improving as teachers become more skilled.
- The school's relationship with the local authority is good. However, while the impact of support from the local authority on early years provision has been good, the impact on pupils' achievement in other years has, until recently, been less evident.
- The school has secured very positive relationships with its parents. In their response to Parent View, parents indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision the school makes to support their children's learning and well-being.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is well promoted and pupils are prepared adequately for the diversity of life in modern Britain. There has been some effective initial work to promote British values through raising pupils' awareness of local democracy and state institutions. There is further work to do for this aspect to be judged good.
- School leaders ensure that all safeguarding arrangements have been fully implemented. Staff are fully checked in line with national requirements. Consequently, pupils feel safe in school.
- Overall, the school successfully ensures that there is equality of opportunity for all. However support for the most-able pupils has not in the past been fully effective. This is now improving. Discrimination in any form is not tolerated.

The governance of the school:

- Over time, governors have not held the school fully to account for its performance. They have not always followed up any concerns rigorously. As a result, they have not shown sufficient urgency in requiring school leaders to address these concerns.
- Governors have ensured that disadvantaged pupils are closing the gaps in attainment with other pupils. They have access to accurate information and are able to compare the school's performance with that of similar schools nationally. They have asked important questions about pupils' performance, based on the information provided to them. However, governors do not challenge senior leaders to improve achievement for all pupils, so standards have stagnated.
- Governors bring considerable expertise to their work. They show commitment, particularly in the development of the school's facilities. They ensure that secure processes for managing teachers' performance are in place so that that pay and promotion are aligned to teachers' effectiveness. These systems have not yet, however, ensured that teaching over time is consistently good. Governors have, however, supported the headteacher in addressing under-performance of staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**Behaviour**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are very committed to their school and are keen to share its strengths with visitors. Most apply themselves well in lessons and demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. However, positive attitudes are more evident where the teaching is challenging and engaging. Where teaching is less motivating, pupils' enthusiasm sometimes wanes and they lose concentration. Their written work is not always produced to a high standard.
- Pupils eagerly take on jobs around the school, such as playground leaders, which give them an opportunity to take responsibility.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is good, with few incidents of misbehaviour. No pupils have been excluded this year. The systems to manage behaviour are robust; well-trained staff deal effectively with any incidents.
- Attendance is below average. This is partly a reflection of a small number of pupils with significant health issues. Staff monitor attendance patterns closely and achieve improvements in the attendance of some pupils.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The site and premises are secure. The suitability of staff is checked fully prior to their appointment.
- Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that adults will protect them. They are knowledgeable about road safety and fire safety. They know that they need to be cautious when close to strangers.
- The school ensures that pupils are able to keep themselves safe. They understand the potential dangers of internet abuse and cyber-bullying.
- The personal, social and health education programme promotes pupils' understanding of bullying well. Pupils know that bullying may take different forms. However, they do not feel that it is a significant issue. The school tackles any emerging problems promptly.
- The breakfast and after-school care clubs provide well for pupils who arrive at school early or need to stay on after lessons end.

The quality of teaching requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because there has not been enough good teaching over time for pupils to make consistently good progress. Teachers do not always have sufficiently high expectations of what

pupils can achieve, or provide enough challenge, particularly for the most able.

- Teachers do not always require pupils to produce their best work, or to complete a given amount of work within the time available. Pupils' written work is not always produced to a high standard.
- Teachers' marking is not ensuring that pupils learn from their mistakes and make good progress. Pupils' work is marked well in some classes, but much less rigorously in others. Not all teachers provide clear enough advice for pupils about how to improve their work further. These teachers only infrequently check that pupils follow up their advice by applying it in later work. Consequently, the same mistakes recur. Teachers do not always challenge poor handwriting and presentation.
- The school has secured more effective teaching in the early years, and of phonics and early reading skills. These improvements have laid better foundations for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to make more rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The teaching of mathematics has improved across the school in the current year, so that pupils are making better progress.
- The support for disadvantaged pupils has improved. These pupils now make better progress than the others, so that, for disadvantaged pupils, the gaps in achievement have been closing. Learning support staff contribute well to ensuring that these pupils do not fall behind.
- When the work is challenging, pupils are very responsive. For example, in a mixed Year 1 and 2 English lesson, pupils were preparing to write a descriptive poem about a fish. The teacher drew imaginatively upon a wide range of resource material and introduced terms such as 'homophone' and 'synonym' which challenged pupils well. Subsequently, pupils produced good-quality descriptions of four exotic fish. The teacher's expectations were clearly established and pupils responded well to these expectations.
- Homework contributes well to pupils' learning. Pupils complete the tasks set each week.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Standards by the end of Year 6 have been broadly average in the last three years. Achievement across the school has been variable. While pupils make good progress in reading in Key Stage 1, progress has not, over time, been good in other subjects and year groups.
- Despite some anticipated improvement in standards at the end of Year 6 in the current year, based upon the school's data and confirmed by inspectors through looking at pupils' work, this is unlikely to represent progress which is any better than that expected in all schools.
- The most-able pupils do not achieve as well as they should. They attain less highly and, in 2014, made slower progress than similar pupils nationally. A lack of challenge for the most able was a feature of learning in several lessons observed.
- Recent improvements to the early years provision, and new leadership, are resulting in steady improvements in children's skills, particularly in the systematic development of their basic literacy skills. Consequently, the proportion of children reaching the good level of development has increased steadily over the last three years and was above the national average in 2014.
- Effective teaching of phonics in the early years has supported increasingly high outcomes in the Year 1 phonics screening check. The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in 2014 was above the national average. Across the school, pupils have generally secure skills in reading.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 are on track to attain broadly average standards in writing and mathematics and above average standards in reading in 2015. All of these pupils are making at least expected progress. Overall standards have been broadly average over the last three years, although they were above average in 2014. This reflected above average standards in reading.

- The school's records show that the rates of progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4 are accelerating.
- The attainment of Year 6 pupils in 2014 was broadly average overall. Progress in writing and mathematics was slower than in reading, but progress required improvement in all three subjects. While the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in 2014 in reading and writing was close to the national average, the figure was lower for mathematics. Fewer pupils made good progress in any subject than was the case nationally.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved this year as a result of the actions taken to address underachievement, especially of the most able. Across the school, most pupils read with confidence.
- Pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs, some of whom have challenging needs, are supported well. Overall, they make better than expected progress from their different starting points.
- In 2014, there was no gap in overall attainment between disadvantaged Year 6 pupils and others in the school. While there was no difference in outcomes in reading, they were just under two terms behind other pupils nationally in writing and one term ahead in mathematics. Consequently, the gaps in attainment across the school are narrowing.

The early years provision is good

- Early years provision has been a recent focus for improvement. As a result, both the provision and children's learning are good. However, they are not outstanding because activities do not always provide sufficient challenge for the most-able children for whom the work set is sometimes too easy.
- Most children enter Nursery with skills which are typical for their age. Staff are very effective in developing children's basic skills in language and mathematics and their personal and social skills. More effective teaching of phonics in the early years ensures that children have a secure knowledge of sounds and letters, which supports their initial good progress in reading.
- Children, including those who have special educational needs, achieve well, because of improvements in teaching. They are much better prepared for entry to Year 1. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development was above the national average in 2014. Provisional data for the current year indicate that this is likely also to be the case for 2015.
- Adults teach children specific skills in small groups, including reading, writing and mathematics, and then have the opportunity to choose from a wide range of other activities that build well upon what they have just been learning.
- Children have good access to outdoor learning. Each class has access to a separate outdoor area and offers a good range of activities to extend children's growing knowledge of the world. The new Nursery outdoor area is well resourced, with a wide range of challenging activities, including good quality climbing and balance equipment, to promote all the areas of learning. Children also have regular access to 'Forest School' activities in the school grounds.
- Children behave very well. They show independence and positive attitudes to learning and concentrate on activities for a lengthy period. They are articulate and confident with visitors. Children are safe and well looked after.
- The school works well with parents and carers. There are home visits prior to entry. Many parents have prior contact with the school through the children's centre, which is now an integral part of the school's provision. Parents are encouraged to stay closely involved with their children's education after they join the school.
- Staff undertake detailed observations of children's progress. This information is carefully recorded and contributes well to the planning of future work.
- Good leadership has contributed strongly to the rapid improvements achieved. Local authority staff have strongly supported the relocation and reequipping of the Nursery.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117171
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	456044

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	263
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Charles Clark
Headteacher	Zoe Hussain
Date of previous school inspection	20 March 2012
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