

Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School

Rectory Lane, Watton-At-Stone, Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3SG

Inspection dates

11–12 July 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Leaders and governors have a clear vision for the school, 'to be the very best that we can be.' There is a strong drive for excellence led by the headteacher.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have concentrated on those actions which will help the school to improve most rapidly.
- Governance is much improved, as governors challenge and support leaders effectively.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced but teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding in reading, writing and mathematics in subjects other than English and mathematics.
- Leaders insist that safeguarding has the highest priority in order to ensure that pupils are safe at all times.
- Leaders have tackled underperformance effectively. As a result of higher expectations and thorough monitoring, the quality of teaching and learning is now good.
- The teaching of phonics is strong and pupils do better than other pupils nationally in the Year 1 check.
- Teachers use assessment to inform their planning. However, tasks are not always adapted so that pupils, particularly most-able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, learn as well as they could.
- Teaching assistants are highly skilled in supporting pupils in lessons and leading intervention groups.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding and they enjoy learning. This is a highly inclusive and nurturing school where pupils trust adults to look after them and keep them safe.
- Pupils are taught to respect and treat each other equally. They are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Children in the early years get off to a good start. Teachers work closely with parents in building up a strong partnership between home and school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teachers and teaching assistants use assessment within lessons to adjust tasks to enable all groups of pupils, particularly the most able and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to achieve the best possible outcomes.
- Provide regular planned opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics across the wider curriculum.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher provides effective leadership. She is committed and dedicated to improving teaching and learning and, as a result, outcomes for pupils. She has built up a strong leadership team that has grown in effectiveness as members of the team use their strengths to support school improvement.
- Leaders and governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school through self-evaluation. The termly plan is focused on those actions that are most effective in improving the school. Leaders have developed a detailed plan which provides a focus for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work.
- Since the previous inspection, the headteacher has tackled underperformance effectively. Checks on teaching and learning are more rigorous, with timely feedback and follow-up support. This is linked to performance management and continuous professional development for staff so that teachers have appropriate support to develop their practice.
- Middle leaders are effective as they check the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in their subject to identify what needs to be improved. For example, English lessons now include the teaching of grammar, which has improved the quality of writing.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. Pupils also enjoy exploring nature through forest school activities which, for younger pupils, are often linked to what they are learning in the classroom. The curriculum does not always offer pupils enough opportunity to apply their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in other subjects.
- The special educational needs coordinator works closely with parents and staff to identify the specific needs of pupils. Parents value the personalised learning plans which are put in place, as they can also access a wide range of support for their child beyond the school.
- The use of additional government funding, including pupil premium funding, is effective. Programmes for intervention are quickly put in place to increase the progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and for the small number of disadvantaged pupils.
- Teaching assistants have been given additional training so that they have the specific skills they need to lead interventions and meet the needs of pupils they work with. They provide support in the development of basic skills, as well as addressing the social, emotional and behavioural needs of individual pupils. For example, staff work closely with families to improve the more challenging behaviours of pupils. This has resulted in pupils showing a positive attitude to learning in the classroom.
- The extra funding to promote participation in sport and physical education (PE) has been utilised well and enabled more pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to take part in sports and gain new experiences. The school is part of the Hertfordshire sports partnership and pupils enjoy competing against other schools in a wide range of sports.

- Parents who expressed their views are very positive about the school and recognise the improvements that have been made under the leadership of the headteacher. One parent described this by saying: 'Leaders are clearly dedicated to ensuring the children reach their potential in an environment conducive to learning.' Another parent recognised how teachers have 'nurtured, inspired, developed and challenged our children since their first days at school.'
- The school has a positive culture which includes all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Leaders recognise the importance of promoting equality, diversity and British values in preparing pupils for life in modern Britain. Pupils understand the importance of democracy and individual liberty in making their own choices. They are developing an understanding of other religions and why it is important to be tolerant of other people's beliefs. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

Governance of the school

- Governors are committed and supportive of the school. They share the school's plan and drive for improvement.
- Following the previous inspection, the school commissioned a review of governance. Governors responded positively to this by developing an action plan to support them to improve. As a result, governors describe the sub-committees as the 'engine room' of the governing body.
- Governors have ensured that the arrangements for managing staff performance are effective and issues of under-performance have been addressed.
- Governors have an incisive knowledge of the school through reports from leaders and the Hertfordshire improvement partner. They work with leaders to monitor aspects of school improvement, provide challenge and hold leaders to account through termly governor days. Governors visit the school regularly to find out how well pupils are learning.
- The spending of additional funding, including PE and sport premium and pupil premium, is monitored closely by governors, who ask challenging questions about its use and its impact on pupils' progress. For example, they understand how barriers to learning for some pupils are identified and addressed through interventions within the school.
- Governors are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding. They make sure that they keep up to date with current guidance and regularly monitor this key aspect of the school's work, so that pupils are safe.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders ensure that pupils' safety is paramount and that safeguarding is an integral part of the school's culture.
- The school ensures that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults who work within the school.

- Leaders and governors work together to complete regular audits and health and safety walks so that any issues are quickly addressed by the site manager and the school has effective arrangements for all aspects of safeguarding.
- There are clear reporting systems in place for logging and monitoring any behaviour or safeguarding concerns to ensure that pupils are safe in school and well cared for. Records are meticulously kept and support for individual pupils is very precise and detailed. Leaders work closely with other agencies, where necessary, to challenge and support families to assure themselves that pupils are safe.
- Staff receive appropriate training for safeguarding, including training on the 'Prevent' duty, so that they understand how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- With changes in staffing and higher expectations from leaders, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is now good and continues to improve and develop as teachers share their best practice.
- Lessons are well-planned and organised, with resources which pupils can choose from to support them when working on their own. Teachers provide clear explanations and a step-by-step approach for learning. Questioning is generally used well and, where it is most effective, pupils are challenged to think for themselves and apply their learning.
- The quality of marking and feedback has improved. There is greater consistency as teachers follow the school's policy. Pupils in key stage 2 describe how they edit and improve their writing; however, there are fewer opportunities for pupils in key stage 1 to respond and improve their writing.
- Pupils are becoming increasingly skilled in applying their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling to their writing. Most pupils take a pride in presenting work well. When pupils are stimulated, they make good progress in writing. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, pupils watched a DVD clip of a tornado and then imagined that they were there. They were encouraged to use their senses to describe the scene and produced high-quality writing. Opportunities to write at length for a range of 'purposes and audiences' across a range of different subjects, for example in science, history and geography, are more limited in some year groups, particularly for key stage 1 pupils.
- In mathematics, teachers provide a good balance of work, which includes calculations and arithmetic as well as reasoning and problem-solving activities. This allows pupils to consolidate and deepen their understanding. One pupil summed this up by saying: 'Mathematics is fun because you can prove things.' However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge and skills in other subjects, such as in science when carrying out experiments and investigations.
- The teaching of phonics is effective. Pupils engage well and make good progress, particularly when sessions are interactive. Pupils do not always have sufficient time to apply their phonics knowledge when writing during these sessions to show what they have learned.
- Leaders have developed tracking systems and teachers are aware of the needs of groups of pupils within their classes through half-termly pupil progress meetings. This information is used well by teachers to plan learning according to individual needs.

- Teachers use assessment between lessons to identify gaps in learning and to inform their planning. However, assessment within lessons is less effective, as tasks are not always adapted as the needs of learners change. Sometimes most-able pupils are not set off on more challenging tasks quickly enough. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are often too reliant on support from teaching assistants and are not given enough opportunities to show what they can do independently, particularly in key stage 1.
- The school provides appropriate information to parents about the progress their child is making and what they need to do to improve. Parents value opportunities to read about what their child is doing and how they can support them at home through the 'class blogs'. Homework is set that is appropriate to the age of pupils and consolidates learning within the classroom.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well as pupils learn about people with different cultures, faiths and economic backgrounds. This has been part of the school's equality objective for this year.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils describe the ethos of the school by saying: 'Our values make our school special – kindness, respect and pride.' Pupils are polite and welcoming; they interact well with each other both in lessons and outside on the playground. Pupils are kind and support each other if they notice someone is upset.
- The school's breakfast club provides a healthy start when pupils enjoy playing games with their friends and reading before the school day begins.
- Pupils relish the many opportunities that allow them to take responsibility within the school. For example, reading ambassadors support younger children by reading with them at lunchtime, while other pupils organise clubs.
- The school nurtures its pupils very well and has a reputation for including all pupils effectively. The 'reflection club' supports pupils when thinking about making the right choices. Pupils talk about the 'feelings box' and 'bubble time' when they can have problems solved by talking to their teacher and their classmates.
- Pupils feel safe in school and said that bullying is extremely rare. They understand what bullying means and the effect that it can have on others. Pupils are confident that staff can deal with any issues quickly so that they are resolved.
- In lessons pupils learn how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. Pupils are very knowledgeable about how to stay safe when using the internet and where dangers may occur.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of how to keep themselves healthy. This was reinforced during 'well-being week', when pupils ran a mile each morning and learned about healthy foods.
- Strong partnerships have been established between the children's centre and the

school, which ensures that families are very well supported.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Leaders set high expectations and pupils respond. Pupils are respectful and polite to adults and each other, listening attentively to the ideas and views of others in lessons.
- The school is an orderly environment; pupils move around the school sensibly, show respect and respond quickly to instructions from adults. Pupils show pride in their classroom charter and know how to abide by the rules. Pupils told inspectors that: 'Teachers are fair in the way they treat us.'
- Pupils understand the expectations for behaviour at different times. For example, during assembly, when pupils were sharing their challenges when learning to play a musical instrument and performing, pupils sang with enthusiasm. At the end of assembly, pupils settled down and returned to their classroom in a calm manner.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning in lessons. The introduction of the 'growth mind set' is supporting older pupils, in particular, in developing greater resilience. Staff provide close and effective support to a few pupils who sometimes show challenging behaviour. This helps them to make the right choices and succeed. Therefore, incidents of poor behaviour are rare.
- Leaders are taking effective steps to improve attendance and continue to work closely with families to support them. As a result, pupils' attendance is improving and moving towards the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Children in early years make good progress from their starting points. By the time they leave Reception, most children achieve a good level of development and are ready to join Year 1 as confident learners.
- Pupils acquire phonics knowledge well to make good progress in developing their reading skills. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics check at the end of Year 1 is in line with national averages. The support given to pupils who fall behind in their reading is timely and effective, so pupils soon catch up.
- At the end of key stage 1, the proportion of pupils attaining age-related expectations in 2016 was close to national averages for reading and mathematics and slightly above for writing. Currently, in key stage 1 pupils are making good progress overall. The recent outcomes in 2017 show an improvement when compared to the previous year.
- At the end of key stage 2, the proportion of pupils attaining age-related expectations in 2016 was above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher standard was above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The recent outcomes in 2017 show that most pupils in key stage 2 continue to make good progress in writing and in applying their knowledge of grammar, punctuation and spelling. Current pupils are making good progress in mathematics. Challenge for the most able pupils is more evident in key stage 2 than in key stage 1, as pupils,

particularly boys, show greater resilience. However, outcomes in 2017 show that the most able pupils did not all reach the higher standards they should achieve.

- Leaders have identified that pupils need to develop greater stamina for reading. Year 5 pupils were observed creating reading journals related to historical fiction books that they had chosen to read and spoke about them with great enthusiasm. Teachers guide pupils in developing their reading skills and, as a result, they read with increasing fluency and comprehension appropriate to their age.
- Overall, disadvantaged pupils make good progress and the most-able disadvantaged pupils are achieving in line with other pupils nationally. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress from their starting points, particularly in reading and mathematics, but they still need support to develop their writing skills fully. Additional government funding is used well to provide interventions that are tailored closely to pupils' individual needs.

Early years provision

Good

- The school has expanded its provision in early years with the addition of a pre-school. Children make good progress in the pre-school and nursery so that they are ready to start school.
- The majority of children start in the Nursery and Reception classes with levels of knowledge and skills similar to those found in children of their age nationally. Adults keep careful records of what children can do through their 'learning journeys' and use this information to plan activities that promote good progress.
- Special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified accurately and at an early stage so that children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given the support they need to help them make good progress from their starting points. Similarly, leaders identify the needs of disadvantaged pupils and ensure that funding provided for these pupils is used well to support them in making good progress.
- The early years leader demonstrates good leadership. She has taken effective action to improve the provision in early years with support from a local authority adviser. This includes developing an exciting and stimulating outside learning environment for children to explore. Creativity is encouraged, often using natural objects. For example, children were painting with pine cones and twigs, while others were creating a sun picture using yellow flowers.
- Staff ensure that children are kept safe and well cared for in the early years. Children's behaviour is good. They learn and play together well, taking turns and sharing. Clear routines have been established, taking safety into account but allowing children to take risks as they explore the outdoor environment. For example, in the nursery, children were working together to construct a train track using crates and planks, ready to go on their train journey.
- Adults model the effective use of language well when working with individuals and small groups. However, occasionally children work and play independently without sufficient adult intervention when adults are working intensively with other children. This slows the progress for these children.
- Children love the experience of the 'mini Mozart' music lessons; they were observed

confidently singing, making actions, counting and keeping a steady beat in time to musical stimuli and stories.

- Tasks are planned across all areas of learning within the early years curriculum. There is a good balance between work that is led by the teacher and opportunities for children to explore ideas for themselves. Sometimes tasks lack focus and do not always provide sufficient challenge for the most-able children, particularly in practising their basic skills such as writing. As a result, children move from one activity to another without spending sufficient time to gain fully from the activity.
- Teachers work closely with parents to support their children's development. In the pre-school and nursery, planning for the week is shared with parents, along with activities that they could do at home. Parents are encouraged to add 'wow' moments to their child's learning journey.

School details

Unique reference number	117171
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10031368

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

Type of school	Nursery/Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	2 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	284
Appropriate authority	The governing body/Local authority
Chair	Charles Clark
Headteacher	Zoe Hussain
Telephone number	01920 830233
Website	www.wattonatstone.schooljotter2.com/
Email address	head@wattonatstone.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	June 2015

Information about this school

- Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School is an average-sized school. The school is part of the Gateway Teaching Alliance, is the lead agency for a group of three children's centres and works closely with two secondary schools. The school expanded in September 2015 to include pre-school provision, providing education for children from two years of age. The children's centre is subject to a separate inspection.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- There have been changes within the teaching staff since the last inspection and three newly qualified teachers joined the school in September 2015.
- The school offers a breakfast, after-school and holiday club.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is much lower than the national average.

- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly higher than that found in most schools.
- A smaller than average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, including sometimes jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to observe learning at other times, to review the teaching of phonics and the broader curriculum, including how the school promotes aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values.
- Observations within early years also included observations of children's learning in pre-school, nursery and reception classes. These observations also included joint observations with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work from all year groups in different subjects, both within lessons and through a joint work scrutiny with leaders, to see what progress they make and how well the school's marking policy is being applied.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their learning and gather their views about the school, the curriculum, behaviour and safety. The inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 2 and 6, and discussed their reading with them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and other members of staff with leadership responsibility. Discussions were had with members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents, including: the school's self-evaluation summary; school improvement plans; information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; and the school's own checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures, including records of checks on the suitability of staff and adults, and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of 72 responses and 46 free-text responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's own surveys for parents and carers, and other communication received, including through speaking to parents and carers at the start of the inspection.

Inspection team

Pauline MacMillan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Nick Templeton	Ofsted Inspector
Henry Weir	Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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