

Woolenwick Junior School

Bridge Road West, Stevenage, Hertfordshire SG1 2NU

Inspection dates

23–24 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Over time, there has been a notable decline in pupils' achievements in reading, writing and mathematics to below those found nationally.
- The rates of progress and standards attained by disadvantaged pupils still lag behind those of other pupils nationally.
- Changes to the teaching team have resulted in inconsistencies in the application of agreed strategies to improve teaching.
- Subject leaders do not set precise enough targets to improve the outcomes achieved by all groups of pupils. This hampers their ability to improve pupils' achievement in their areas of responsibility.
- The quality of teaching varies. While some teachers plan tasks that match pupils' ability and stage of learning effectively, this is not consistent. Pupils' skills in writing and mathematics do not develop quickly enough.
- The most able pupils make inconsistent progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This includes the most able disadvantaged pupils.
- Although leaders are improving the quality of teaching, it is not yet consistently good.
- Governors' work to hold leaders to account regarding the use of additional funds has not been sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- Following a decline in outcomes, the school is starting to improve. Leaders' ambition to provide the best experiences for all pupils is producing effective actions.
- Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, behave well and show respectful and tolerant attitudes to others.
- The school's values are ever present in the actions of staff and pupils.
- Safeguarding of pupils is effective. Staff know that safeguarding is a priority at all times. Pupils say that they feel safe. Parents have a high level of confidence that their children are safe and well looked after.
- Since the appointment of the acting headteacher in June 2017 and the substantive headteacher in October 2017, improvements are evident in the quality of teaching and work in pupils' books.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - securing consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, particularly with regard to writing and mathematics
 - supporting and challenging all subject leaders to evaluate and report precisely on the progress of all groups of pupils within their areas of responsibility.
- Improve outcomes for pupils by:
 - accelerating pupils' progress so that they attain the standards they should
 - diminishing the differences between the rates of progress made by disadvantaged pupils and those of other pupils nationally with similar starting points.
- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching by ensuring that:
 - work is consistently well matched to the needs of pupils and provides suitable challenge for all pupils, in particular the most able
 - agreed whole-school initiatives to improve teaching are implemented consistently in every class
 - teachers and teaching assistants use highly effective questioning consistently, especially in mathematics, to deepen pupils' learning.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Renewed leadership is systematically addressing any inconsistencies that have arisen since the previous inspection. Leaders maintain a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching. Aided by recent key appointments, they are successfully moving the school along the path to improvement.
- Recent leadership changes have ensured that the school has stopped the decline in assessment outcomes. As a result, a greater number of current pupils are on track to reach age-expected standards. The new headteacher has a clear vision for the school and has already put several initiatives in place to support both pupils and staff. He has the drive and ambition to make Woolenwick Junior School a good school once again.
- Senior leaders are deeply committed to the school and the community it serves. They pride themselves on knowing each pupil well and this has enabled the school to extend a high level of care and support to many families, particularly in times of crisis. The headteacher takes great pride in the school's reputation of offering a safe and inclusive environment to all-comers.
- Senior leaders have worked with focus and intent to tackle weaknesses in teaching and learning across year groups and subjects. They have not been successful, yet, in securing teaching, learning and assessment that are consistently good. Consequently, pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, is too variable.
- Following a period of instability in leadership, some systems, such as the new approach to tracking the achievement of pupils, are not understood well by all leaders. Leaders are clear about the attainment of pupils and can explain the progress of individual pupils. However, they do not all have a strategic oversight of the progress made by different groups of pupils from differing starting points.
- Leaders have overseen some effective improvements to aspects of the curriculum, such as the development of the programme for the teaching of reading. This has led to better outcomes for current pupils. However, leaders have not made certain that pupils achieve as well as they should in all areas of the curriculum. In writing and mathematics, pupils are not given enough opportunities to work at greater depth.
- Leaders keep a check on the behaviour of pupils through logs of incidents which are monitored routinely. The school's system for rewarding pupils' behaviour and achievement has supported the majority of pupils to develop good attitudes to learning. Pupils conduct themselves well. They show tolerance towards others, recognising and celebrating that society comprises individuals from a wide range of backgrounds.
- Leaders have ensured that the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is effective. Pupils are rewarded for making good choices. Pupils benefit from a range of opportunities provided through physical education (PE) and sport funding. These have raised their awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and led to recent success on the football field. Staff model, from the earliest stage, respectful attitudes, which pupils adopt throughout the school. Pupils are prepared well to become conscientious citizens and are prepared for life in modern Britain, for

example through becoming peer mentors, house captains and PE sports leaders.

- Senior leaders are committed to improving the life chances of all pupils, but their actions are not yet fully effective in reducing differences for disadvantaged pupils. Leaders consider carefully how to channel additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, there has been some improvement in differences between disadvantaged pupils and others nationally in reading, writing and mathematics over time. However, for current pupils, differences remain too variable.
- Subject leaders take part in a range of professional development to hone their skills. In some subjects, teaching and learning are improving quickly as a result of leaders' actions, for example in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, not all leaders understand how well pupils are doing in their areas of responsibility. Assessment information is either not yet in place or is imprecise. Pupils' progress over time in subjects other than English and mathematics is unclear. This makes it difficult for teachers to plan work that is in step with pupils' needs or interests.
- Leaders make careful use of special educational needs (SEN) funding. Pupils who require additional support because of their SEN and/or disabilities make good progress in terms of their personal, social and emotional development due to the effectiveness of the special educational needs coordinator.
- Leaders have taken steps to enrich the curriculum. Using subject experts in areas such as music and PE, leaders make a concerted effort to enhance pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy a rich diet of external visits to exciting venues such as the London Planetarium and The British Museum. These culminate in a residential trip to an adventure and outdoor activity centre in Year 6.
- School leaders have welcomed the recent support from the local authority to help them improve the clarity, consistency and rigour of improvement planning and actions. The local authority has provided effective support and training, particularly in relation to improving the skills of middle leaders. However, there has not been sufficient time for this to bring about the required improvements.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, are positive about the school. They commented, 'I am very happy with the school and the support given to my child', and, 'Woolenwick Junior School creates a positive environment for children to thrive.'

Governance of the school

- Governors are knowledgeable about their role and the contribution they should be making to the overall leadership of the school. They demonstrate a strong ambition for the school. Governors visit regularly and show a keen determination to improve the school. During the inspection, several governors attended a 'governors' day' and spent time with their assigned classes.
- Minutes of governing body meetings show that governors challenge the information that leaders present. However, governors have not focused this challenge on the attainment of pupils. This has impeded the governing body's ability to hold leaders to account for the impact of their work.
- Governors are diligent in undertaking their duties, such as overseeing leaders'

performance management of staff. They understand the importance of leaders work in matching pay with school improvement and pupils' outcomes, and support leaders in withholding progression where it is not warranted.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Staff are well trained and have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. Leaders ensure that all pupils are safe. Where pupils are considered to be at significant risk of harm, leaders take the necessary action and make an effective contribution to multi-agency meetings.
- Leaders have ensured that appropriate checks are undertaken to confirm the suitability of adults to work with pupils. Systems within the school, such as the arrangements for pupils to enter the school in the mornings, are well managed to keep pupils safe. Parents have confidence that their children are safe at school. Pupils reported that they feel safe in school. They have complete confidence that adults will sort out any issues or problems. Staff know pupils well and this contributes to the harmonious and trusting relationships between adults and pupils.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching over time has been inconsistent. It has resulted in pupils not reaching the standards they should. Recent changes in how the quality of teaching is monitored are ensuring that teaching is improving for current pupils throughout the school. However, these improvements are not fully developed yet and inconsistencies remain.
- Teaching does not consistently secure strong progress for pupils in all subjects because teachers do not make best use of assessment information to set tasks at the right level for pupils' ability. While some pupils make strong progress over time, others, including the most able, do not make progress as quickly as they should.
- Some teachers make the very best use of every available moment. They respond promptly to address pupils' misconceptions. No pupils are left waiting for support, challenge or direction. This good practice, however, is not yet consistent across year groups.
- Teachers' feedback to pupils on their work is not consistently effective in helping pupils improve. They do not follow consistently the school's guidance. In lessons, pupils have limited opportunity to consolidate or extend their understanding. This is because questioning by staff is too variable and does not routinely allow pupils to deepen their knowledge and understanding of, and skills in, key concepts, especially in mathematics.
- Pupils' writing is focused on daily grammar exercises. Pupils' books show that these are having some impact on developing this aspect of their writing. However, pupils do not consolidate their learning as well as they could because they do not practise their skills for extended periods on a regular basis across the curriculum.
- Some teachers use their good subject knowledge to accelerate pupils' progress. For example, inspectors observed pupils understanding how fractions could be expressed

as decimals and percentages because of the clarity of the teacher's explanations. This good practice is not evident across the school, however.

- Teaching assistants support pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities, well. They are particularly successful in moving pupils' learning on when tasks provided by teachers are well matched to pupils' abilities.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and stick closely to the school's behaviour policy. Very occasional low-level disruption in lessons is addressed quickly and effectively.
- The vast majority of pupils are eager to learn. They work conscientiously to complete tasks, sometimes showing great patience when they have been quick to finish work that is not challenging enough. They generally take pride in their work, although several topic books were poorly presented.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of different types of bullying. They confirmed to inspectors that bullying rarely occurs in school. Recent work to promote online safety has ensured that pupils recognise how to keep themselves safe when they use the internet. They show a good awareness of the issues related to cyber bullying and have confidence that adults will quickly tackle any problems that arise in school.
- Pupils show respect and care for each other. They value their classmates' opinions and are used to working happily and cooperatively in lessons. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening in paired and group discussions are good. During an assembly, pupils listened carefully and enjoyed celebrating each other's successes. For example, children's designs from their previous school had won a competition to improve dustcarts in the community. Classes enjoy competing to win the weekly 'kindness challenge'.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are good. Most pupils are very keen to succeed and to produce their best work. They take their roles of responsibility in the school community very seriously. They are proud to be house captains, peer mentors or PE sports leaders.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is strong. Pupils talked convincingly about how they learned about people from other countries and cultures and their faith. Pupils enthusiastically discussed the Hindu religion and how the puja tray and diya lamps are important to Hindus.
- The school operates a before- and after-school club each day. Pupils are well cared for and provided with a range of learning opportunities, as well as time to develop social skills.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' attendance is in line with national averages over time. Leaders take swift and decisive action to support and challenge families to address issues where needed. The percentage of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen each year.
- Pupils enjoy their learning and mostly work conscientiously. Incidents of low-level disruption are rare as the majority of pupils are self-disciplined and their conduct in classrooms and on the playground is good.
- Behaviour systems encourage positive attitudes to learning, and the few incidents of misbehaviour are swiftly and deftly addressed. Pupils told inspectors that they are expected to behave well and respect the equipment in their classes.
- Leaders and staff keep detailed records of behaviour, looking carefully for any patterns or recurring issues. The professional sharing of information means that instances of poor behaviour are rare and dealt with in a fitting manner.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because not enough pupils across the school are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points.
- In recent years, outcomes for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics have declined and have been below the national average. As a result of weaker teaching in the past, there is a legacy of inconsistent achievement and gaps in some older pupils' skills and knowledge. Leaders are now taking appropriate action to improve outcomes and have stopped the decline.
- Evidence from work in pupils' books shows that pupils currently in the school are now beginning to make stronger progress from their starting points. This has not always been the case, as seen in published statutory data from 2015 and 2016. Actions taken by leaders to improve teaching and accelerate pupils' progress are now starting to take effect and a higher percentage of pupils reached expected standards in 2017. Analysis of work shows that this upward trend is continuing and more pupils are now working at age-related expectations than in previous years.
- Across the school, the most able pupils are not consistently challenged academically to reach their full potential. The work set and teachers' feedback illustrate that much of the work is too easy. However, some good examples exist where teaching is more effective, where pupils persevere when presented with more complex tasks in English and mathematics.
- As a result of the developing effectiveness of the use of pupil premium funding, disadvantaged pupils in each year group are starting to make stronger progress in English and mathematics. The differences between the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers are diminishing across the school.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities generally achieve well in relation to their starting points. Leaders, teachers and parents are involved in regularly reviewing the suitability of plans to support these pupils. Direct support to individuals takes good account of pupils' social and emotional needs.

- Pupils enjoy reading and many of them show appropriate fluency and comprehension for their age and ability. Leaders have chosen to introduce a clear system of 'reading fluency' and this is having a positive effect as current pupils are making good progress in reading. Pupils were observed reading from a range of genres and enjoyed reading extracts from a newspaper designed for schoolchildren.

School details

Unique reference number	117322
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10037634

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	231
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Shadbolt
Headteacher	Gary Hawkins
Telephone number	01438 216565
Website	www.woolenwickjm.herts.sch.uk
Email address	head@woolenwickjm.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	13–14 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Woolenwick Junior School is an average-sized junior school.
- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is broadly average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced significant staffing changes, including among the senior leadership team, and recruitment issues. Following the departure of the previous headteacher in the spring of 2017, the school appointed an acting headteacher and subsequently a substantive headteacher. The current headteacher started working at the school in October 2017.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards. These are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school operates before-school and after-school provision through its 'BLAST Club'.
- The school shares its site with the feeder infant school, a children's centre and a privately run nursery. These are all inspected separately. The school is the lead agency for three children's centres in North Stevenage.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment over time. They observed learning in classes and in small groups, individually and with members of the senior leadership team.
- The inspectors looked at examples of pupils' work, talked to them about their work and listened to pupils read.
- Inspectors talked with pupils informally as they played at breaktimes, visited the dining hall at lunchtimes and observed pupils' behaviour as they moved around the school. They met formally with a group of pupils.
- An inspector met with the chair of the governing body and three other governors.
- An inspector spoke to a representative of the local authority who has provided support to the school.
- Inspectors spoke to parents at the start of the school day. They took account of 55 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, and also obtained the views of 24 staff members. The school's most recent survey of parents' views was also considered.
- Inspectors examined a range of documents, including information about pupils' progress, school development plans, information about teachers' performance, and external views of the school. Inspectors scrutinised school records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Joseph Figg, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

Bridgette Gough

Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017