



Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School

Inspection Report

Better
education
and care

Unique Reference Number 117171
Local Authority HERTFORDSHIRE
Inspection number 290744
Inspection dates 9–10 January 2007
Reporting inspector Gillian Smith

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

Type of school	Primary	School address	Rectory Lane
School category	Community		Watton-at-stone, Watton-at-stone
Age range of pupils	3–11		Hertford, Hertfordshire SG14 3SG
Gender of pupils	Mixed	Telephone number	01920 830233
Number on roll (school)	229	Fax number	01920 830582
Appropriate authority	The governing body	Chair	Mrs Sarah Davies
		Headteacher	Mrs Lisa Mannall
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002		

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School is average in size. Almost all of its pupils come from White British backgrounds and speak English as their first language.

The proportions of pupils who are entitled to free school meals, have learning difficulties or disabilities or a statement of special educational need are below average. Pupils' social and economic backgrounds are broadly average and children enter the Nursery with knowledge and skills that are typical of children nationally. There are slightly more boys than girls.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

This is a good school where pupils of all abilities achieve well; it has some outstanding features and also some areas for development. The headteacher is an excellent leader and has assembled a team that is clearly focussed on raising standards and improving the quality of education provided. The outstanding curriculum ensures that pupils of all abilities are able to develop their individual talents and provides pupils with a good education. Pupils are proud of their school and greatly enjoy learning. They develop into inquisitive, confident and articulate young people; their behaviour and personal development are outstanding. Attendance is good. All adults are receptive to new ideas and keen to learn from one another. Within this reflective environment, and supported by a high standard of care, pupils make good progress. The school enjoys the full confidence of parents and they speak highly of the school and its leadership.

Provision for children in Foundation Stage is exceptionally well planned and managed and children make good progress. By the time they enter Year 1, most of the children exceed the expected levels and they continue this good progress in Key Stage 1. Between 2001 and 2005, standards at the end of Year 2 were either good or outstanding but fell to average in 2006 because of the high number of pupils with learning difficulties.

Teaching and learning are good. Over the last two years, however, standards attained by boys and girls in Years 2 and 6 have often differed significantly. In 2006, for example, boys attained average standards in English, mathematics and science, whereas girls attained exceptionally high standards in mathematics and science and above average standards in English. However, overall standards in Year 6 are typically above the national average. The school recognises the differences between boys' and girls' performance and that progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 has not always been consistent. To address these fluctuations, it has recently introduced setting by ability in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, and a revised system of marking pupils' writing. It is still too early, however, to gauge the impact of these initiatives on pupils' progress and the results of national testing.

Leadership and management are good and underpin the school's success. The school is constantly seeking to improve and makes outstanding use of links with outside organisations. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are accurate, systematic and never complacent. Governors are highly committed, experienced and set challenging targets. They are fully involved in monitoring the school's performance. The school is consequently exceptionally well placed to improve further and provides excellent value for money.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make progress more consistent across Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Improve pupils' progress by ensuring that new school initiatives to support academic guidance are implemented effectively by all staff.
- Ensure boys achieve the same high levels of progress that girls do.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress and achieve well because the standard of teaching is good and the curriculum meets their needs exceptionally well. Progress made during Key Stages 1 and 2 is occasionally a little more variable but, overall, pupils achieve well. By the end of Year 6, the standard of pupils' work is above average in English, mathematics and science. Girls do especially well and, in 2006, the standard of their work was exceptionally high in mathematics and science. The standard of boys' work is similar to the national average but below that of girls within the school.

With the exception of 2006, standards at the end of Year 2 over the last six years have frequently been significantly above average. In 2006, however, standards fell to average. This is because a relatively high proportion of pupils in this group had learning difficulties. Standards seen in Year 2 during the inspection, in contrast, were significantly better. Most pupils currently make good progress and achieve well across both key stages, though this is less true of older boys, something the school is currently addressing. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils make an outstanding contribution to life within school and the wider community. For example, the school council helps to interview job candidates and advises governors on how to improve the school building. Pupils develop a very good understanding and respect for people from other countries and cultures and raise substantial funds for their partner school in Sri Lanka.

The behaviour and attitudes of pupils have improved since the last report and are now outstanding. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and healthy. Their ability to take responsibility and work together in teams, combined with good progress in basic skills means that they are exceptionally well prepared for the world of work.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching is good. Teachers know their pupils very well and adapt the way they teach to suit pupils' individual learning styles. This helps pupils to grow in confidence and their willingness to contribute during lessons helps them to make good progress. Behaviour management has improved since the previous inspection and these factors combine to produce a calm, thoughtful and focused learning environment within which keen and enthusiastic pupils work hard. Teachers provide good challenge for pupils

of all abilities and develop the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) well. Pupils ask searching questions and make very good use of classroom support staff. Teachers are keen to learn from one another and classrooms are lively, exciting places within which pupils learn a great deal. In some lessons, however, learning is reduced because activities end early or go on too long. In addition, teachers do not always thoroughly review what pupils have actually learned.

Procedures for tracking pupils' progress are strengthening. New systems for marking pupils' writing across the curriculum and for peer and self-assessment were introduced at the start of the academic year. Pupils now receive very clear feedback on their progress.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is creative and challenging and provides tremendous enjoyment through its variety. The school is keen to nurture 'the whole child' and teachers adapt the curriculum very well to suit their pupils. Children in the Foundation Stage get off to a good start with many interesting and exciting activities. For example, they learn to use a digital camera and create artwork using the computer. The school works exceptionally well with other providers to extend the curriculum and pupils of all ages learn Spanish. The curriculum is further enlivened by themed days such as 'Eastern European Day' and 'Antarctica Day.'

Links with the wider community provide many additional experiences. Pupils undertake a very wide range of trips and visits. Residential experiences, from Year 2 upwards, widen pupils' horizons and promote outstanding personal development. In addition, the many visitors and wide range of after school clubs strongly promote the importance of following a healthy lifestyle. Clubs such as 'Speed Stacking' and an activities club for non-sporty pupils also ensure that all pupils are given the opportunity to shine at something.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

High quality care, support and guidance contribute much to pupils' good achievement and outstanding personal development. Relationships between adults are close and pupils feel safe and very well looked after. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are rigorous and staff recruitment procedures meet national requirements.

Rigorous monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress help to ensure that pupils of all abilities achieve well. The school is constantly seeking to improve the quality of educational guidance provided. To this end, it has introduced a range of measures that are intended to improve the education guidance provided. These include a system whereby teachers set short-term targets (known to the school as 'layered curricular targets') which clearly state what pupils need to do to improve their work. In addition, a system of self and peer assessment was recently introduced and pupils are learning how to review their own progress and that of others. It is, however, too early to gauge

the impact these measures may have on pupils' progress and the results of statutory testing.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Strong leadership and management at all levels ensure that this school never relaxes in its drive for continual improvement. The school thoroughly and accurately analyses its performance, and improvement since the last inspection has been good.

The excellent headteacher is ably supported by the senior management team. New initiatives are firmly based on detailed analyses of the school's performance. The improvement plan is soundly based and has clear criteria for evaluating progress made. However, recent initiatives, such as setting pupils by ability in Key Stage 2 and a new approach to the marking of writing across the curriculum have not had time to demonstrate improvement although pupils say they now enjoy their learning far more, especially in mathematics. The headteacher successfully encourages all staff to share responsibility for leadership, be self-evaluative and open to new learning.

Governors provide considerable expertise and outstanding support. They have a precise and sharply defined vision for the future, monitor the school's performance very closely and set challenging targets.

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Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

11 January 2007

Dear Children

Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School, Rectory Lane, Watton-at-Stone, Hertford, Hertfordshire, SG14 3SG

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited you recently. Your willingness to help us made it much easier to find out what it is like to be a pupil at Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School. I thought you would like to know what we thought about your school. The things we particularly liked were:

- Your excellent behaviour and the way you are maturing into thoughtful, polite and confident young people.
- You really enjoy learning, get on very well with each other and attend school regularly.
- Staff take very good care of you and help you feel happy at school so that you can concentrate on your learning.
- The school works well with other people in the community to give you extra opportunities and support those who need extra help.

You were quite right when you told us that yours is a good school. You try hard during lessons and make good progress. By the time you leave school at the end of Year 6, you are doing well in English, mathematics and science. Your teachers are constantly looking for lots of new and interesting things for you to do.

There are a few things your teachers could do to make your school even better. These are:

- Help you to make more even progress during your time at school.
- Improve the standard of your work by, for example, helping you to become more familiar with assessing how well you have done and how you can improve.
- Help boys to reach the same high standards often achieved by girls.

With all good wishes for your future at Watton-at-Stone Primary and Nursery School.

Gillian Smith Lead Inspector