

Woolenwick Junior School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	117322
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	326573
Inspection dates	11–12 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Goodchild

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 on roll	
School (total)	196
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Jonathan Ellam
Headteacher	Mr Mike Crabtree
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2006
School address	Bridge Road Stevenage Hertfordshire SG1 2NU
Telephone number	01438216565
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school is slightly smaller than most junior schools and has experienced a falling roll in recent years. Numbers have begun to stabilise but since the last inspection, the school has taken in a number of pupils who had been excluded from other schools. The number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has increased to an above average proportion. The school has also been subject to a very high rate of mobility, with as many as a third of the pupils in some year groups leaving or joining the school. The vast majority of pupils are White British. There have been many recent staff changes and the school has a number of newly qualified teachers.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

This is a satisfactory school that provides pupils with a high standard of care and a satisfactory education. It has gained the Inclusion Quality Mark in recognition of its work with vulnerable pupils and its effectiveness in integrating pupils who have previously been excluded from other schools. Through its work as an extended school, it provides a great deal of support to parents and families. In addition, it has recently been instrumental in the development of a children's centre on the Woolenwick site to provide further support to the local community. These initiatives reflect the staff's readiness to 'go the extra mile' in meeting pupils' personal and social needs. The school promotes community cohesion well and high quality pastoral support ensures that pupils' personal development is good. Pupils say that they feel safe and know that there is an adult to turn to if they need help. They enjoy school and attend regularly. They have a good understanding of healthy living, readily take part in the many clubs and other special activities and make a good contribution to the school community. The school prepares them satisfactorily for the next stage of their education.

Achievement is satisfactory. From a broadly average starting point, pupils make satisfactory progress to reach standards that are broadly average. Standards in mathematics are lower, however, than those in English and in the last two years more able pupils have not done as well as they should have done in Year 6 tests. Following a dip in results in 2008, the school is working closely with the local authority to raise standards, especially in mathematics. It has introduced a number of initiatives to increase the achievement of various groups of pupils. There are early signs that these initiatives are having a positive effect on pupils' achievement.

Pupils are making satisfactory progress in response to satisfactory teaching and a curriculum that is sound overall with some good features. Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and lessons are usually well prepared. Although teachers pinpoint different tasks for groups of pupils to complete, some work within lessons offers insufficient challenge for more-able pupils. Teaching assistants provide valuable support where they work with individuals and small groups of children out of lessons but the role of teaching assistants in class is not as well developed. Pupils concentrate well and show that they want to learn in lessons where teaching is good. They respond well to opportunities to work independently, for instance when undertaking open-ended tasks for homework. However, staff do not have consistently high expectations of pupils academically. The school identifies pupils who have particular gifts and talents but it has not yet developed a comprehensive programme to support their development.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Senior leaders provide satisfactory leadership and direction to the school's work and the headteacher has a clear desire to improve the quality of education. The school is working very closely with the local authority in its efforts to raise standards, and senior leaders have put in place good systems for monitoring teaching and learning. Self-evaluation is not as rigorous as it could be in driving continuous improvement because the new senior team are still developing their roles. Governors provide good support and challenge to the school.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that teachers match work to the learning needs of all pupils, consistently ensuring challenge for the most able.
- Further develop the role and make more effective use of teaching assistants.

- Strengthen self-evaluation at all levels so that information from monitoring is used effectively by everyone to raise expectations and drive continuous improvement.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

The school's Year 6 test results were average in 2007 but fell to below average in 2008. Whilst standards remained average in English, they were below average in mathematics and science. As at the time of the last inspection, too few pupils gained the higher Level 5 results in English, mathematics and science and the school missed its targets. Currently, standards are broadly average and pupils are making satisfactory progress. Involvement in an intensive programme with the local authority aimed at raising achievement is ensuring that pupils who had previously underachieved in mathematics are now making satisfactory progress. Nevertheless, standards in mathematics remain below those in English. Initiatives to raise standards in writing have already begun to bring about an improvement in standards. The school's targets for 2009 offer satisfactory challenge and its own tracking data suggests that pupils are likely to exceed their targets in English. In lessons, pupils usually make satisfactory progress although teaching does not always provide enough challenge for the most able. Learning logs, which set pupils open-ended tasks for homework, make a good contribution to pupils' progress. Pupils' logs show that they are able to research topics independently and express their ideas in interesting ways. This work is providing valuable consolidation of and extension to pupils' knowledge and understanding in English, mathematics and science and providing a good deal of scope for higher attaining pupils to produce lengthy pieces of work.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils enjoy school, and they appreciate the very wide range of extra-curricular activities on offer. They show a good awareness of the needs of others and develop a sense of responsibility, for instance as peer mentors or sports leaders in the playground. Pupils' moral, social and cultural development is good and their spiritual development is satisfactory. They have a good understanding of the diversity of cultures represented in their own society and the wider world. They also have a good awareness of the need to stay healthy through sensible eating and exercise. Behaviour is satisfactory overall and many pupils behave well. Pupils are confident that instances of misbehaviour will be dealt with effectively and say that they feel secure in school, as well as showing a good awareness of how to keep safe. Attendance has improved and is now above average. Pupils have a voice in the school through the school council, and their suggestions have recently been put into practice in the reorganisation of the dining hall. They also contribute well to the wider community, for example, through raising money for charity and singing in residential homes. Pupils develop satisfactorily the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) that they need for later life. They have a good understanding of the need to work with others.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

The school has satisfactory systems in place to ensure that new and inexperienced teachers receive appropriate support. Lessons are usually well prepared and teachers share their learning intentions with pupils. Most teachers have good classroom control, use interactive whiteboards well and they all try to make learning interesting for the pupils. Teachers' planning shows that they regularly plan different tasks for different groups of pupils. However, when pupils spend too long together as a whole class, for example seated on the carpet, work at times lacks challenge for the most able. Tasks planned for average and higher attainers are sometimes too similar. In contrast, teaching generally meets the needs of lower attaining pupils well. The school carefully assesses pupils' attainment on entry and checks their progress on a termly basis in English, mathematics and science. Assessment information is used satisfactorily in meeting pupils' learning needs.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The school offers a broad curriculum that meets national requirements and is responsive to local needs. Provision for literacy, numeracy and ICT is satisfactory although computers are not used to support learning in all subjects as well as they could be. A number of special programmes have been established to support various groups of pupils in literacy and numeracy, and these are beginning raise achievement. The school makes use of the 'International Primary Curriculum' in a number of subjects: an approach that provides a global perspective to topics studied. This and links with a school in Zimbabwe contribute well to pupils' personal development. In addition, learning is deepened through focused weeks for particular subjects such as art and science. Pupils have good opportunities to make a start in learning a modern foreign language: German is taught throughout the school with support from a local secondary school. The curriculum is enriched by a range of visits, for instance to the Science Museum and Hatfield Forest, and by visitors to the school. There is a wide range of sporting and other clubs and out of school activities, in which the vast majority of pupils participate, and there are good opportunities for pupils to learn a musical instrument. There are, otherwise, only limited opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to extend their skills.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides very good pastoral care and good academic guidance and support for its pupils. Legal requirements for safeguarding, including child protection, are met. The school provides exceptionally good support for pupils who are vulnerable, and the family liaison worker works very closely with families to ensure they send their children to school regularly and to keep them well informed about their children's progress. Pupils who have been excluded from other schools receive very good support and guidance to ensure they settle and make a fresh start. The school works closely with a range of other agencies to support pupils who find learning more difficult, and it has good procedures for managing pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Meetings between teachers ensure that pupils' progress is monitored carefully and those who need extra help are identified. Pupils understand their targets in English and mathematics and marking offers some useful guidance on the steps pupils need to take.

However, staff do not always instil high expectations in pupils to enable them to believe in their own potential to do well.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher and senior leaders ensure that pupils learn in a supportive and caring environment. The school readily embraces new initiatives and members of the restructured senior leadership team are beginning to work effectively together to ensure all pupils make as much progress as they should. Teachers who manage literacy and numeracy are working well with local authority advisers and consultants in their efforts to raise achievement. Provision for pupils who require additional support with their learning is led and managed well. The school has good links with local secondary schools which benefit pupils, for instance in sport, and it is developing closer links with the adjoining infant school. In liaison with the local authority, senior leaders have an accurate understanding of the most important things that need to be improved in order to raise standards. Furthermore, improved tracking of pupils' progress means that the school now has measures in place to identify pupils who are not doing as well as they should. Although aspects of monitoring are good, self-evaluation is satisfactory and does not yet engage all members of the school community in having high expectations for driving forward school improvement. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and it is satisfactorily placed to improve further. Governors fulfil their role well and provide good support and challenge to the school. They gather information for themselves and their clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses enables them to challenge senior leaders by asking probing questions.

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Annex A

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?	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	3
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	3
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

13 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woolenwick Junior School, Stevenage, SG1 2NU

Thank you for making us welcome when we visited your school, and a special thank you to those of you who told us what it is like to be a pupil at Woolenwick Junior. I am writing now to let you know what we found out about your school.

The teachers and teaching assistants look after you very well and really care about you a great deal. There are many school clubs you can join and plenty of outings, including residential trips when you get into Years 5 and 6. You have the chance to play a lot of different sports and it is good to see how many of you take part in all these activities. You told us that you enjoy school and most of you behave well and try hard. You are doing best in reading and writing but not quite so well in mathematics. We were very impressed with your learning logs and it looked as if many of you had great fun researching information and finding exciting ways of presenting it.

Mr Crabtree and the other teachers are right in thinking that this is a satisfactory school and we want to help them to make it better for you. We have asked them to:

- help you to make faster progress, especially in mathematics by making sure that you all do work that is not too difficult and not too easy and provide activities for the most able pupils that really stretch them
- further develop the role and make better use of teaching assistants
- look even more closely at what is working well in the school and what could be improved by making sure that everyone plays their full part.

You can help them by always working hard and by thinking about how to make your work better.

Yours faithfully

Ms M J Goodchild

Lead inspector