

Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	115123
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	379010
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	92
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Colin Bennett
Headteacher	Sue Dodd (Acting)
Date of previous school inspection	13 May 2009
School address	The Street Woodham Walter Maldon CM9 6RF
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by two additional inspectors, who observed nine lessons taught by five teachers. Meetings were held with staff, pupils, parents and carers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation about pupils' progress, policies, particularly those for safeguarding, as well as the school development plan and evidence of self-evaluation. They considered responses to questionnaires returned by 80 parents and carers.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How much progress do pupils make in Key Stage 2, especially in mathematics?
- How similar is the progress made by different groups of pupils?
- What is the impact of changes in leadership on the effectiveness of the school?
- How effective are the current arrangements for the Early Years Foundation Stage?

Information about the school

Woodham Walter Church of England Primary is a small school. The very large majority of pupils come from a White British heritage. Very few pupils speak English as an additional language and none is at the early stages of learning English. A very small number of pupils come from Traveller families. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is broadly average. The school has achieved national Healthy Schools status and the full International School award. The school has four mixed-age classes, with children in the Early Years Foundation Stage taught alongside some pupils from Year 1.

The acting headteacher was formerly the deputy headteacher and leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the first instance she stood in for the departing headteacher from Easter 2011, and now replaces the headteacher appointed in September 2011, who then became ill.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Woodham Walter Church of England Primary is an excellent school. Many aspects of its work are outstanding, including its provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils' behaviour, attendance, understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles, and their contributions to the school and wide community are outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is exceptional. The curriculum is outstanding and the quality of care, guidance and support is excellent. Both of these areas are exceptionally well supported by close links with external agencies. The school has outstanding relationships with parents and carers. One wrote, 'This is a wonderful example of how a small village school can achieve big things. Our children are doing really well here and we are very happy with the school and dedicated staff'. Several parents and carers, speaking with the inspectors during the inspection, praised the school for how well it helped pupils moving from other schools settle into Woodham Walter.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average and rising after a fall in recent years. Attainment in English is above average and in mathematics is broadly average. Pupils express themselves well, and with confidence, in both speech and writing. They use a wide range of writing styles well. Most pupils write neatly and spell accurately, but a small proportion spell frequently-used or displayed words inaccurately, and an equally small proportion of others do not sustain neat, well-presented writing. Pupils' numeracy skills are generally good and most pupils carry out calculations accurately using well-practised methods. However, while the rote methods they use work most of the time, pupils do not always fully understand the mathematical processes they are using. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, and good progress in mathematics is leading to the fast improvement in attainment. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and those who join the school during the school year, make good progress.

Good teaching, sometimes with outstanding features, is leading to good learning and improving attainment and progress. Relationships are excellent, and teachers' explanations of new work are often outstanding. Assessment information is used well to plan work. Activities capture pupils' interest and are closely matched to pupils' abilities. Marking is good and pupils have a good understanding of their next steps in learning and how they can reach them. New pupils are swiftly assessed, so that their learning can continue with a minimum of disruption. Pupils' literacy work in several subjects is displayed and celebrated readily in classrooms, and this encourages

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pupils' engagement in literacy activities. Mathematics work is not displayed as often, so opportunities for engagement in numeracy activities are limited. The curriculum promotes pupils' enthusiasm for learning extremely successfully. Visits and visitors enrich pupils' experience and enjoyment. The regular visits to the 'forest school' on adjacent farm land encourage pupils to develop self-confidence, independence and creativity because they plan and carry out their own activities in the time they spend there. The range of out-of-school activities is very wide, well supported by pupils, and much appreciated by parents and carers.

Pupils enjoy school. They say that bullying is so unusual that they are not concerned by it. They are very mature in their views of unacceptable behaviour. They say it is rare, dealt with well and does not interfere with their learning. They take on a wide range of responsibilities in the school and the local community and carry them out extremely well. Pupils eat sensibly, know why particular foods are good for you and engage in a very wide range of physical activities. They are polite, friendly and confident.

Recent disruption in senior leadership has been managed very well, with continuity of leadership effectively supported by the governing body and local authority. The acting headteacher provides excellent direction for the school's improvement. Other leaders, some new to their roles, are effective. Self-evaluation is accurate and the school has a clear understanding of the areas it needs to improve. Successful action has been taken to improve pupils' attainment and progress, especially in mathematics. The governing body has successfully driven through plans for rebuilding parts of the school and is now focusing on improving accommodation for pupils in Key Stage 2, about which some parents have expressed concern. The governing body holds the school to account effectively and supports strategies to improve pupils' attainment. Despite some parents' concerns, provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to be excellent and is continually monitored by the acting headteacher, who works closely with staff to plan work for children. Given the improvements in attainment and progress, and the effectiveness with which the school has dealt with the changes in senior leadership, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise levels of attainment by ensuring:
 - spelling and handwriting improve
 - pupils consistently understand the basic mathematical processes they use.
- Improve the quality of teaching to the best seen by replicating for numeracy the strategies used to celebrate, display and use pupils' work to promote literacy.

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Children usually start school with skills that are in line with expectations for their age. This varies from year to year because of the small numbers in each year group. Changes that take place during the year can also change the characteristics of a year group: for example, in the current Year 6, several pupils left and a significant proportion of new pupils arrived with below-average levels of attainment. The performance of pupils currently in Year 6 indicates good progress from their starting points. Past differences in attainment in English and mathematics have narrowed considerably. Pupils use a wide range of vocabulary and complex sentence structures in their speaking and writing. For example, in one lesson, pupils in Years 5 and 6 talked and wrote about the reasons for pilgrims making the risky journey to America for a freer life. They used connectives and contractions of words like 'couldn't' and 'shouldn't' well in their writing. The highest-attaining pupils wrote eloquently and other pupils, sometimes with effective support, produced persuasive reasons for making the journey. However, throughout the school some pupils spell incorrectly and others do not take enough care with their handwriting. Pupils' mathematical skills are generally good. Most pupils know their multiplication tables and, of the small number who do not, all know which ones they need to work on. They perform calculations well, especially if they are straightforward. However, when problems are slightly unusual, their understanding of the mathematical processes needed is sometimes not good enough to help them solve the problem they are tackling. Throughout the school, the great majority of pupils make good progress, and those who started at the school after the beginning of the school year rapidly settle to work and to make at least satisfactory, and usually good, progress in their first few weeks. For some pupils, progress is excellent, usually due to great enjoyment of learning and effective support from teachers and classroom assistants. The small proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language and those from Traveller families make good progress.

Pupils are enthusiastic about school and all it offers, and parents' and carers' comments reflect this. They raise funds for several charities, and support a school in Kenya. They identify risks in the 'forest school' before other pupils use it. In the local community they are involved in church and village activities and entertain parents to lunch at school. The three hours of timetabled physical activities each week and the high level of commitment to healthy eating shown by pupils reflect their excellent understanding of how to maintain healthy lifestyles. The great majority of pupils have a very good grasp of what it is like to live in different areas of the world and to go to larger schools in other parts of the United Kingdom. They have an outstanding understanding of the traditions and values of people from different cultures living in modern Britain.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning Taking into account:	2
	3

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Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is challenging and meets the needs of the great majority of pupils. For example, in a story-telling lesson for pupils in Key Stage 1, the focus of 'traction man' was used successfully to develop pupils' writing skills. The highest-attaining pupils developed good punctuation skills and all pupils extended their vocabulary. Lower-attaining pupils were supported effectively to produce simple sentences. Marking gives good guidance on how well pupils perform and how they can improve their work. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills are planned in most lessons but, while pupils' literacy work is frequently displayed for pupils to discuss and review, numeracy work is not used so well. Learning is generally good because pupils are confident to speak out, and they develop their ideas through effective use of small group discussion.

The curriculum is rich and varied and encourages pupils' enthusiasm for school. Opportunities for personal development and for pupils to use their imaginations are effectively developed through 'forest school'. Problem solving, self-confidence and self-expression are promoted through art, music, physical education and science. Experiences are enriched through French, visits to towns and sports activities with other schools. Pupils acquire enterprise skills successfully through established links with local farms and a jam factory. The link with a Kenyan school is used very effectively to promote art, geography, history and economic understanding. Out-of-school gymnastics, drumming, guitar, piano, craft and gardening activities are well supported.

Excellent relationships with families and the diverse range of support agencies the school uses contribute extremely well to the outstanding quality of care, guidance

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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and support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported extremely well, as are those whose challenging circumstances may make them vulnerable. High levels of attendance are promoted very effectively. Parents and carers are extremely well informed about the activities the school does, curriculum topics, and about how well their children are doing at school. Transfer arrangements into the Reception year and to secondary schools are thorough and sensitive.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher has continued the school's effective practice of evaluating its performance, and has established strategies to continue to raise attainment, especially in mathematics. This is already having a very positive impact. Staff are entirely supportive of the drive for improvement and value the quality of support they receive. The governing body is effective and, despite some parents' concerns at there being no permanent headteacher, has been extremely careful in its attempts to appoint the right person to the post. Engagement with parents and carers is excellent, with high levels of attendance at consultations about pupils' progress. The school runs well-attended sessions to help parents and carers support their children gain literacy and numeracy skills. The parents' support group is very active with social and fundraising events. Some parents provide personal support in extending pupils' knowledge of how, for example, the fire service, farms and restaurants work. Partnerships to promote pupils' learning and well-being are excellent. Links with the local sports college help widen pupils' experiences of different physical activities, and parental support and external agencies are used extremely effectively. The school promotes community cohesion well, especially in the school, the immediate locality and at international levels (for which it has the full International Schools award) through its link with Kenya.

The schools' procedures to safeguard children are thorough and all requirements are fully met, although minor recording issues were resolved at the time of the inspection. The school works effectively to ensure the grounds are safe and secure. It promotes equal opportunities well. Pupils from different backgrounds make good progress and the difference in progress in English and mathematics has narrowed sharply. Procedures to eliminate all forms of discrimination are well established as part of the ethos of the school, and are extremely effective.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good and often outstanding progress from their starting points when they join the school. By the time they enter Year 1 the great majority exceed age-related expectations in all skills. Almost all children are confident in their speech and writing. They have a large vocabulary and converse with each other and adults extremely well. The great majority count well, recognise numbers and measure short lengths accurately. Children's behaviour is excellent. They get on well together, share resources, and help each other to recognise numbers and count. They are encouraged to choose their own activities within an extremely well-planned framework of tasks that need to be done to help promote their progress. The outdoor area is exceptionally attractive and well planned. Children rush to enjoy it, given the chance, and are keen to show visitors around the wide range of activities and resources it provides. Adults engage children in conversations and encourage them to speak, question, discuss their ideas, and to gain independent learning skills effectively. Children are exceptionally well cared for and there are extremely good links with homes and nursery settings. Transfer into Year 1 activities is very smooth, as children in the Reception year are taught in the same class as some younger Year 1 pupils. The setting is led and managed outstandingly well, with close supervision and support from the acting headteacher. Self-evaluation is excellent. For example, staff have identified numeracy as an issue further on in the school and introduced strategies to the Reception year to give children a stronger foundation in mathematical skills.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

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Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

Most parents and carers responded to the questionnaire, which is above average. The great majority of responses were very supportive. However, a small minority of parents and carers expressed concern at there being no substantive headteacher. Inspectors found that parents and carers have no cause for concern. The school is very well led by the acting headteacher, who is well supported by staff, the governing body and the local authority. A very small proportion of parents and carers felt the school did not always deal with unacceptable behaviour well enough. Inspectors saw only excellent behaviour and pupils confirmed that poor behaviour is extremely rare, and is dealt with swiftly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 80 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 92 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	86	11	14	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	70	88	8	10	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	44	55	33	41	2	3	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	55	69	22	28	2	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	62	78	16	20	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	53	66	23	29	2	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	75	18	23	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	43	54	33	41	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	51	64	28	35	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	41	51	37	46	1	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	49	61	29	36	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	42	53	24	30	7	9	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	62	78	17	21	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2010 to 08 April 2011 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2010/11 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 November 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodham Walter Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Woodham Walter, CM9 6RF

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited you. We judged that you are at an excellent school and that you make good progress. The following things are particular strengths of the school.

- Teaching is good and lessons are interesting. The school has planned an exceptional range of activities to make sure you enjoy learning.
- The headteacher, governors and staff are working very well to make sure the school continues to improve.
- You feel extremely safe, behave outstandingly well, and your attendance is excellent.
- Many of you have responsibilities in school, work closely with the local community, and raise funds for many charities. You do these tasks extremely well.
- You have an excellent understanding of how to stay healthy. You take part in a very wide range of physical exercise and eat sensibly.
- The school takes exceptionally good care of you and ensures you are safe.

In order for the school to be even better, we have asked your teachers to make sure:

- you spell accurately, write neatly and understand the basic calculation methods you use in numeracy
- you have as many opportunities to look at and discuss your numeracy work on display in your classrooms as you do for literacy work, so that your progress in mathematics improves more rapidly.

You can help by making sure you spell carefully, write neatly, and that you understand how to work out numeracy problems.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector

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