

Woolenwick Junior School

Bridge Road West, Stevenage, SG1 2NU

Inspection dates 13–14 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The astute leadership of the headteacher has been pivotal in the school's improvement since the last inspection. He has a strong staff team who support his ambitions for the pupils and the school. Regular checking of the school's performance enables leaders to plan carefully for its improvement.
- The governing body is highly effective and has a major impact on the way the school has been able to improve.
- As a result of the strong commitment of all teachers to become more skilled at what they do, teaching is now good and is sometimes outstanding. This is leading to rising pupil achievement.
- Marking is another area of considerable improvement. Pupils respond well to the guidance teachers give them. This benefits their learning and progress.
- School leaders are sharply aware of the circumstances of and challenges facing some pupils and their families. They carefully target resources and additional funding to where they can have the maximum effect on the pupils' achievement and personal development.
- Pupils largely behave well in lessons and at other times. They are polite and courteous and their movement around the school is quiet and orderly.
- As teaching has improved, the pupils' enthusiasm for learning and their aspirations have risen. This is reflected in their continually improving attendance levels.
- Governors and staff do their utmost to ensure pupils are safe at all times. Pupils report that they feel safe at school and know who to approach if they have a problem.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Not all teachers and support staff expect enough of pupils or challenge them sufficiently, particularly the most-able.
- Teachers do not make sufficient use of pupils' responses to adapt their teaching so that it extends pupils' learning further.
- Girls do not progress as rapidly as boys in mathematics and their attainment is lower by the end of Year 6. This is because they are not always confident enough to try ideas out and learn by their mistakes.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 14 lessons, eight of which were observed jointly with the headteacher, deputy headteacher or assistant headteacher. In each of these lessons inspectors examined the work in pupils’ books.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, school staff, and members of the governing body including the Chair. A telephone conversation was undertaken with a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View) and held informal discussions with parents at the start of the school day.
- Inspectors observed the school’s work and looked at a number of documents, including the school’s own information on pupils’ current progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to safeguarding. Inspectors also took account of the 25 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Martin Beale, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Jacqueline Bell-Cook

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is average in size.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average. The proportion speaking English as an additional language is well-below average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for funding through the pupil premium is above average. This is extra money given to schools for looked after children, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children from service families.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action is well-above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is average and falling.
- The headteacher was granted leave of absence for the autumn term 2013. The school was led by the deputy headteacher during this period.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school shares its site with the feeder infant school. A Children's Centre and a privately run Nursery also have their accommodation on the school site. Both are inspected separately.
- The school operates before-school and after-school provision (BLAST club) for pupils from both itself and the infant school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Make more teaching outstanding by making sure that teachers:
 - raise their expectations of what all pupils can achieve and set work that consistently challenges the most-able pupils
 - keep a close check on how well pupils understand what they are being taught, and adjust their teaching accordingly so that pupils' learning quickly moves forward.
- Raise achievement in mathematics by:
 - providing pupils with more opportunities to develop their skills through mathematical investigations
 - encouraging girls to try ideas out for themselves so that they can learn from their mistakes.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Pupils make good progress while at the school particularly in reading and writing. Year 6 test results have been rising as pupil progress has increased. Results were broadly average in 2013 but higher in reading than in mathematics. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 in mathematics, reading and writing was above average. The proportion reaching higher levels was below average, particularly in mathematics but also in writing. This was partly because the most-able are not consistently challenged across all classes.
- Pupils' good progress in reading is enhanced by effective use of a school-wide programme of small-group work on an almost daily basis. These sessions develop skills such as comprehension and research well. They also help pupils who have fallen behind expected levels for their age catch up so they are not disadvantaged when they leave for secondary school.
- The school makes effective use of the pupil premium to increase the progress of eligible pupils and raise their attainment, largely through extra individual and small-group work. The gap in attainment between eligible pupils and others in the year has closed in reading and mathematics to less than one term, but remained just over a term in writing. This gap is much narrower than nationally and remains so for current pupils.
- Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make similarly good progress, although their progress is stronger in some year groups than others. The school has rigorous systems to identify individual needs and monitors these pupils' progress very carefully.
- Girls make slower progress than boys in mathematics in spite of the action the school takes, such as additional before-school teaching for selected girls who are not making sufficient progress. A significant number of girls lack confidence and are unwilling to make mistakes from which they could potentially learn. Although the school is concerned to make pupils' number skills more secure, the lack of opportunities for pupils to employ and extend these skills through mathematical investigations has meant it has not been as successful in this regard it had hoped.

The quality of teaching is good

- The improvement in teaching reported at the last inspection has continued. Teaching is now good and the major factor in the pupils' improving achievement. Typically teaching captures the pupils' attention and enables them to learn new skills quickly.
- Teachers ensure that their classes are calm and well-managed and that teaching engages and retains pupils' attention. Most, but not all, teachers question pupils carefully to check understanding, encourage them to think more deeply and make sure all pupils work hard and remain on task. Pupils greatly enjoy reciting together, with actions, the pieces of writing they are studying and discussing their ideas with a partner. This aids the development of their writing.
- Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to learning when leading small groups in aspects of literacy and numeracy as part of the 'Success for All' programme. These sessions are very valuable in developing the skills of disabled pupils and those who have special needs.
- The guidance teachers give to pupils through their marking and other feedback is another area of improvement since the school's last inspection. Pupils now are very clear about how well they are doing and how to improve their work. They regularly respond to their teacher's comments by

taking on board their suggestions, eliminating mistakes and improving their work.

- Teachers do not always move the pupils' learning forward quickly enough. This is because not all teachers consistently have high enough expectations, particularly of the most-able pupils. They set work that either goes over old ground or does not extend pupils' thinking sufficiently. Not all teachers routinely adapt their teaching once they have realised that pupils have, or have not, understood their learning, and this restricts pupils' progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils respond well to their teacher's high expectations of their behaviour and their consistent implementation of school policies. Pupils are considerate towards each other and show great respect to adults at all times.
- Pupils generally want to do well and are keen to succeed. They try hard in lessons and are very keen to answer questions or share ideas with a partner or the whole class.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school takes extensive measures to keep pupils safe. Governors are rigorous in ensuring its safeguarding policies are fully implemented and that the school meets all requirements. Parents and carers are of the view that the school keeps their children safe and cares for them as individuals. Pupils learn how to look after themselves through road safety and e-safety training.
- Attendance has improved because of the robust action the school has taken to reduce absence and reward regular attendance. Attendance was average last year and has improved further since then.
- Pupils are fully aware of what forms bullying can take. The pupils say any rare incidents are followed up and dealt with quickly. This view is very much supported by their parents and carers.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher's strong leadership is highly respected by staff, parents, pupils and governors. He has led the school with determination through a period of improvement since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher maintained the school's momentum during his absence last term, an indication of the strength of the management systems within the school. The headteacher has assembled a strong staff team who share his ambitions and those of the governors and who are equally keen that the school should continually improve.
- The successful drive to improve teaching continues. School leaders carefully check teaching and use these checks to establish each teacher's training needs. Teachers work closely with each other and learn by sharing their expertise and ideas. The management of teachers' performance is firmly linked to their pupils' progress. Pay enhancement is not awarded unless teachers meet challenging targets for the progress of pupils in their classes.
- The local authority has worked alongside the school in supporting its development since its last inspection. This has included support for improving teaching and learning and providing training for the priority of raising achievement in mathematics. The headteacher greatly values this support as well as the support and expertise he can obtain locally from the town's educational trust.

- Staff make good use of assessment data and the strong partnership between parents and the school to ensure they know the needs of the pupils and their circumstances well. This enables leaders to target adult support and additional resources, such as the pupil premium, closely to meet their needs. The 'BLAST club' before and after-school is well-run and much valued by parents who access its services.
- The school focuses sharply on developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills but also ensures breadth to their experiences through topics and special events such as science week and 'M.A.D. day' of music, art and dance. Regular trips take place to support work in topics and to develop the pupils' awareness of other cultures. The school prepare pupils well for later life by making them aware of local, national and international issues through assemblies and a current affairs slot in their weekly timetable.
- The school uses the new sports funding well to widen pupils' experiences of different sports. This has led to them trying fencing and in the near future taekwondo amongst others. The school has seen a considerable increase in pupil participation, including in tournaments organised through the local sports partnership. The school also employs specialist coaches who provide sessions of handball and trampolining that pupils greatly enjoy.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors maintain a high level of expertise through regular training, such as on the interpretation of assessment data, and continually reflect on how they can become more effective as a group. Governors have challenged the school over what is being done to raise the achievement of girls in mathematics and check the impact of action taken. Their termly visits ensure that they know first-hand about the quality of teaching and the steps the headteacher takes to bring about its improvement. They are fully aware how the headteacher manages teachers' performance. They look closely at the targets he sets teachers and are happy that they are sufficiently challenging and acting as an incentive for their performance to improve. The governing body keeps a very tight rein on finance and as a result has been able to redevelop parts of the accommodation to provide small group teaching spaces. They are starting to look at how they can use additional funding such as the pupil premium and sports funding to bring about sustainable improvements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	117322
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	430755

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 of pupils on the school roll	216
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Catherine Shadbolt
Headteacher	Mike Crabtree
Date of previous school inspection	22 May 2012
Telephone number	01438 216565
Fax number	01438 216566
Email address	admin@woolenwickjm.herts.sch.uk

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