

Warden Hill Infant School

Birdsfoot Lane, Luton, Bedfordshire LU3 2DN

Inspection dates

10–11 May 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Outstanding

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has high expectations and ambition for all pupils to achieve well academically and in their personal development.
- Any weaknesses identified through leaders' and governors' thorough and accurate evaluation of the school's performance are addressed decisively and effectively.
- The headteacher ensures that pupils' needs, interests and learning lie at the heart of the school's continuous work to make improvements. Pupils always come first at Warden Hill. Support for vulnerable pupils and their families is excellent.
- Leaders have taken effective action to address weaknesses in teaching and learning that led to the underachievement of Year 2 pupils in reading, writing and mathematics in the 2016 national tests.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are good overall. Effective teaching is having an impact on improving current pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's strong values and ethos promote equality of opportunity, inclusion and diversity. Parents speak highly of the school in this regard.
- Most pupils behave well because staff expect them to. They enjoy school and develop as happy, confident learners.
- Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Safeguarding is a high priority. It is effective because all staff share this responsibility.
- In the early years, children make good progress in developing their early reading, writing and mathematical skills. The majority achieve a good level of development by the end of Reception so that they are ready for learning in Year 1.
- The headteacher is strengthening capacity for leadership through the creation of new posts to lead year groups and special needs. These roles are not fully developed.
- The leadership team has identified that activities led by adults in Reception are more effective in promoting children's development than those that children choose for themselves. Provision for outdoor and child-led play does not stimulate children's curiosity well enough.
- The contribution of teaching assistants in promoting pupils' good learning is variable in its quality and effectiveness across the school.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve provision for children in the early years by ensuring that:
 - outdoor activities are inviting and interesting and teaching assistants seize opportunities to encourage children to try new things and develop their own ideas
 - there is a better balance between child-led and adult-directed learning to increase opportunities for children to explore, investigate and solve problems on their own.
- Improve consistency in the effectiveness of teaching assistants' delivery in the early years and key stage 1, especially when they are responsible for leading learning for groups in class.
- Further develop the leadership skills of team leaders and those responsible for special needs especially in checking the quality of teaching and learning and giving developmental feedback to staff.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, supported ably by the deputy headteacher and governors, provides staff with clear direction. Everyone is on board to continuously improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- The headteacher is astute and measured in her approach. She ensures that staff are not overwhelmed with taking on too many changes at once. Many staff told inspectors that they feel professionally re-energised under her leadership. They can see the positive impact that new ways of working are having on pupils' learning.
- Effective systems for appraisal, with specific targets linked to the school's priorities for improvement, ensure that staff understand their contribution to raising pupils' achievement. Teachers new to the profession are supported well by experienced staff in their first year of teaching and beyond.
- Staff receive regular training, coaching and access to external courses to develop their professional knowledge and skills. For example, leaders responsible for special needs are acquiring specialist knowledge in speech, language and communication, gifted and talented and autism to influence and improve provision.
- The school's evaluation of its effectiveness is accurate. Identified weaknesses become the school's targets in planning for future improvement. The chosen priorities are the right ones moving forward because they are all linked to teaching and learning.
- The school is drawing upon support from the local authority to improve provision in the early years. This, for example, has improved the year leader's understanding of effective practice through opportunities to observe good early years practice in other local schools.
- The decline in the 2016 Year 2 national test results was not typical for the school. Leaders quickly identified reasons underpinning the disappointing results. They have taken steps to reverse the trend, for example in increasing pupils' resilience in reading when tackling lengthy pieces of text. Most pupils in all classes, especially in Year 2, are currently making good progress from their starting points.
- The achievement of disadvantaged pupils, pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, and most-able pupils, including those who are also disadvantaged, are priorities in the school's action plans. They are currently receiving extra teaching such as additional phonics sessions before and after school to help them to catch up.
- Changes in the way that pupil premium and sport funding is spent are making a difference, such as increasing disadvantaged pupils' access to extra-curricular music and sports activities. These are increasing their self-esteem, motivation, regular attendance and, therefore, their enjoyment and fulfilment in learning.
- The headteacher and governors ensure that special needs funding is spent wisely. Leaders of special needs have devised a case study for each pupil who receives extra help or who has an education, health and care plan outlining the provision they receive to meet their complex needs. Using these, staff and parents are well informed about what pupils' needs are and how they can best support them.

- The school communicates its strong values extremely well. The values are threaded through the curriculum. For example, during the inspection, 'patience' was the value that pupils were learning about. An opportunity for pupils to reflect on the value was seized during a singing practice. The values contribute to pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Curriculum provision is broad, balanced and enriched with many exciting and engaging activities before, during and after school plus special event days such as a science day. Pupils enjoy these activities immensely. This makes a considerable contribution to their positive attitudes to learning and their good achievement.
- Leaders ensure that pupils learn all that they should in the statutory early years curriculum and the national curriculum. They track pupils' progress in all subjects, including English and mathematics, to ensure that they are making enough progress.
- The family worker provides excellent support for vulnerable children and their parents. She is a key person involved in transition arrangements when pupils start school and when they transfer to the junior school. Families experiencing difficult periods in their lives are identified and supported to access extra help. As a result, their children settle in to school quickly so that they can learn and make progress.
- Partnership work with parents is strong. Inspectors received many glowing comments from parents during the inspection such as 'it's this school that makes me stay in Luton' and 'if you have a concern they listen even if they can't change their decision'.
- Leaders and governors ensure that the sport funding increases pupils' participation in physical education and sporting activities as intended. Pupils benefit from extra-curricular sports led by specialist coaches and attendance at sports festivals. Pupils who do not usually choose to take part in physical activities are targeted especially to join in.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching and learning regularly and provide staff with feedback to help them to improve. Year group leaders are in the early stages of developing the required skills to assess quality accurately. Monitoring to assess teaching assistants' contribution to good learning is not rigorous enough. There are inconsistencies across the school.

Governance of the school

- Governance is well organised and structured.
- Governors know what their role is in supporting and challenging leaders in equal measure. They are developing more open-ended lines of questioning that challenge leaders.
- Governors bring a range of skills and knowledge that are used beneficially in fulfilling the governing body's statutory duties. They are well informed about the community, finance, human resources, social services, housing, charities and education.
- Meetings are regular and well attended. Governors plan ahead in considering all options to sustain good-quality provision over time.
- Governors know the school well. They visit regularly and take pupils' views into account. They are well informed and well trained. Governors confirmed that 'we are

getting smarter at using the governor hub to draw upon the best practice in other schools’.

- Governors are familiar with the school’s internal information about pupils’ achievement and the school’s national published data. This places them in a strong position to ask pertinent questions about all groups of pupils’ current achievement, and they do. A governor confirmed that, ‘We asked questions about why outcomes were weaker in 2016 and we got the answers.’
- Spending of pupil premium, the sport funding and funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully monitored to ensure that it makes a difference to pupils’ academic performance.
- The governing body ensures that the school’s website is kept up to date with information that it is required to publish.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school’s message ‘don’t think it couldn’t happen here’ is visible to all staff and visitors.
- Leaders, including governors, give safeguarding a high priority. A culture for shared responsibility to safeguard pupils exists among staff. Leaders have developed robust procedures to keep pupils safe.
- Clear lines of communication, fully understood by all staff, ensure that concerns, however small, are passed on in writing to the designated lead for safeguarding and followed up appropriately. Three recorded ‘niggles’ for any pupil prompt an in-depth investigation.
- The designated lead professionals are confident in making referrals to Luton’s multi-agency safeguarding hub if appropriate. They do not hesitate to seek advice from health and professionals from social services to inform their decision-making if needed.
- Record-keeping is of consistently high quality, enabling leaders to retain an overview of child protection cases and to supervise the actions being taken to support the most vulnerable pupils.
- The single central record of statutory checks on all staff and adults working with pupils is completed properly to ensure their suitability to work with children. Requirements for recruiting staff are followed carefully and documents to evidence this are held securely in staff files. The headteacher and governors make regular spot checks to ensure that the single central record and staff files meet requirements.
- Parents know that the school will always put their children first and take appropriate steps to ensure their safety.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good overall and strongest in Year 2.
- Good relationships between pupils and staff are apparent. Teachers have consistently

high expectations for behaviour. They expect pupils to behave well and they do.

- Classrooms are well-organised, inviting spaces for learning with attractive areas for reading in every room to encourage pupils to browse and read books.
- Teaching ensures that pupils learn all that they should in terms of the national curriculum programmes of study for English reading, English writing, mathematics and other subjects. Assessment across the full range of subjects informs regular meetings to discuss how well pupils are learning and to identify individual pupils who require more support to catch up.
- Systematic teaching of phonics ensures that pupils develop secure knowledge and understanding of sounds that they apply well to read and write words. Teachers model and introduce pupils to new, more sophisticated words to use in their writing.
- Teachers use interesting resources to support learning that capture pupils' interest and inquisitiveness. For example, in science, real fruits were used to show pupils how the seeds varied in size and number depending on the fruit. Pupils learned the difference between the jewel-like seeds of a pomegranate compared to the single, central seed of an avocado pear.
- Parents receive helpful feedback from teachers about how well their children are progressing and how they can help them with learning at home. Useful written reports, for example, explain clearly how well their children are performing and what they can do at home to help them. Weekly learning logs provide parents with an overview of what their children have been learning.
- The teaching of reading and writing is stronger than it is in mathematics. In mathematics, number is taught well to build pupils' mathematical fluency and accuracy. There is less evidence in pupils' books of opportunities for them to develop reasoning and problem-solving skills.
- Teaching assistants consistently support pupils in their personal development and well-being sensitively, especially when working with individual pupils. However, their contribution in promoting good learning when supporting pupils more generally in class is variable. Some are effective and support learning well; others lack the necessary knowledge and skills to lead learning effectively.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils' well-being is seen as equally important to their academic performance. The school ensures that individual pupils who may be suffering bereavement of a family member or anxiety, for example, spend quality time with adults during the day so that they can talk about their feelings if they would like to.
- Most pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They like to please their teachers. They take pride in their written work and complete tasks.
- Attendance for all pupils is average and it is improving, especially for disadvantaged pupils. Parents are quickly alerted and frequently reminded when their children's

attendance begins to falter.

- Pupils are confident happy learners. Parents confirmed that their children enjoy coming to school and that they are well looked after.
- Pupils spoke warmly about responsibilities that they have in school such as 'super wiping' of tables at lunchtime.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Almost all of the 33 parents responding to Parent View (94%) and those who spoke to inspectors directly confirmed that pupils are well behaved.
- From Reception through to Year 2, pupils' conduct is generally good. They patiently wait and take turns.
- Pupils eat their lunch quietly and clear away after themselves. Out in the playground, pupils stick to the rules such as not crossing the 'invisible line' that separates their play space from the junior school.
- Pupils feel safe and they are safe. Effective teaching of e-safety coupled with helpful information for parents keeps pupils safe online.
- The school council brought to the headteacher's attention inconsistencies in how individual staff implement the behaviour policy. This was followed up and the policy reaffirmed to improve consistency in approaches.
- Most pupils show enthusiasm for learning. They develop opinions about their likes and dislikes and can explain them. They appreciate trips to places of interest and show wonder and amazement, for example when they saw that beans they had planted began to grow roots.
- Pupils know how to make good choices which contribute to their good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. When they move on to the adjoining junior school they are ready and prepared for learning in the next phase of their education.
- Some pupils are boisterous in their play. The school is working on improving the range of activities for pupils to choose from at play times such as 'street art' where boys and girls use chalk to create pictures and patterns on the playground surface.
- A few pupils are prone to variable behaviour. They are supported well with clear boundaries and expectations from staff and quickly recover from momentary lapses.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Most pupils, including the most able pupils, are currently making good progress from their starting points in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects.
- By the end of Year 2, most pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities have made good progress from their starting points.
- Pupils who have an education, health and care plan for their complex needs are making suitable progress from their individual starting points in both their learning and

their personal development.

- Pupils who speak English as an additional language acquire spoken and written English language quickly and make similar progress to other pupils.
- Most pupils use their good knowledge of phonics to break words down into shorter sounds to read them and to blend sounds together to write words. They have secure knowledge of the high-frequency words that occur most often in written material.
- The school ensures that pupils whose circumstances limit opportunities for them to read regularly at home spend quality time reading to an adult in school. Most enjoy reading and engaging with fiction and non-fiction books.
- Pupils develop a sound understanding of English spelling, punctuation and grammar. Their handwriting is generally well formed and tidy.
- Typically, pupils make good progress in developing confidence and fluency in mathematics.
- Pupils sing tunefully and with gusto. They enjoy musical experiences and they excel in them. They work with interest and enthusiasm in history and science activities. Work in Year 2 pupils' science books showed that they were making good progress in applying their knowledge and skills to make predictions and draw conclusions.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including most-able disadvantaged pupils, are not doing quite as well as others. Their progress is currently gathering speed because the pupil premium is used to provide extra help and they are catching up. This is beginning to diminish the difference between their attainment and other pupils with similar starting points.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective teaching ensures that children make good progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of learning. The proportion of children reaching a good level of development in readiness for learning in Year 1 has been consistently above the national average for three years.
- Children's early reading, writing and number skills develop well. Teachers monitor the progress that children make from their starting points diligently and action is taken quickly to provide extra help for individual children in weaker areas of their learning.
- Children enjoy engaging in play with others. They are willing to take turns and help each other. They are keen to answer when asked a question and to practise their writing.
- Phonics is taught well and children show that they are able to break words down into shorter sounds to read them and to blend sounds together to write words.
- Leadership in the early years is effective. Evaluation of what is working well and what could be even better is accurate. The early years welfare requirements are met fully.
- The leader is developing a new approach to assessment to evidence the stage of development that children have reached using technology and this is working well.
- Good relationships exist between staff and parents. Staff meet with parents every term to discuss how well their children are learning.

- The quality of teaching by teaching assistants is variable. They are more effective when they are deployed to lead a specific activity than when children are choosing activities for themselves. Some are not sufficiently alert to opportunities to draw children into an activity and extend their thinking. They tend to do too much for the children rather than encouraging them to do as much as they can for themselves.
- Outdoor activities do not provide enough scope for children to investigate, explore and find things out for themselves. Some activities are not challenging enough to deepen children's thinking or for them to follow their own interests.

School details

Unique reference number	109570
Local authority	Luton
Inspection number	10031410

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	John Young
Headteacher	Sue Dorban
Telephone number	01582 595150
Website	www.wardenhillinfant.co.uk
Email address	admin@wardenhillinfant.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	28 February 2007

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- This is a larger than average infant school that has grown by more than a third since its previous inspection. There are now four classes in each age group.
- The headteacher is new since the previous inspection and has been in post for 18 months.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who speak English as an additional language and those who receive special needs support is below average.
- The proportion of pupils with complex needs who have an education, health and care plan is above average.

Information about this inspection

- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector has the discretionary power to inspect any school in England under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The school's overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding in its previous inspection in 2007 and, as such, it would normally be exempt from regular inspection.
- A decline in standards in 2016 prompted a one-day section 8 inspection led by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to evaluate the progress and attainment of current pupils. The HMI converted the inspection to a full section 5 inspection during the first day. The HMI was joined by three Ofsted inspectors on the second day to complete the inspection.
- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in most classes, sometimes jointly with the deputy headteacher.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read to inspectors and talked about their books.
- Inspectors looked at pupils' written work in English, mathematics and other subjects in most classes. The school provided information about the progress that pupils are making currently. Published information about pupils' attainment and progress in relation to all pupils nationally was considered.
- Pupils were observed during morning and lunchtime breaks. Inspectors spoke to pupils while they worked in class and more formally in groups.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, year group leaders, teachers new to the profession, staff responsible for administration, nine governors including the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documentation including policies and record-keeping for safeguarding. The single central record of statutory suitability vetting carried out on all staff, volunteers and governors was checked.
- The school's information about how well it is performing and its plans for future improvements were evaluated.
- Inspectors spoke to parents in person and took into account responses to Parent View and school surveys.

Inspection team

Linda Killman, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Lynn Lowery	Ofsted Inspector
Jacqueline Treacy	Ofsted Inspector
Vicky Parsey	Ofsted Inspector

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