

# Wirksworth Junior School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	112652
<b>Local Authority</b>	DERBYSHIRE
<b>Inspection number</b>	289363
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Susan Aldridge

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	178
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mrs Jacqueline Ferguson-Lee
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr James Hawley
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	3 December 2001
<b>School address</b>	Wash Green Wirksworth Matlock Derbyshire DE4 4FD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01629822457
<b>Fax number</b>	01629822457

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This is an average sized school that takes pupils mainly from one infants' school in Wirksworth. On entry, pupils' knowledge and skills are average. Almost all pupils are White and of British heritage; very few are from minority ethnic groups. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are average. Almost a quarter of pupils have learning difficulties, which is higher than average; eight have statements of special educational need. The school's work has been recognised by Activemark and the Health Promoting Schools Award. The school has experienced a period of considerable staff turbulence in the last two years, including the long-term absence of key staff through illness, a change of deputy headteacher and the retirement of other key staff.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school's overall effectiveness is satisfactory, and this is how it sees itself. It provides a satisfactory quality of education and is successful in its mission to provide a safe, caring and happy environment for all pupils. Leadership and management are satisfactory and the school gives satisfactory value for money. A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit from an Ofsted inspector before their next Section 5 inspection.

In the last two years, considerable turbulence has taken its toll on the management of the school, but the relatively new leadership team has demonstrated clearly that it can diagnose weaknesses and rectify these. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection and the school has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

Standards are slightly higher than those found at the last inspection. Following a dip in standards in 2005, local authority support was secured and standards in 2006 were better. Pupils enter the school with knowledge and skills that are average and they leave in Year 6 with average standards, indicating that their achievement is satisfactory. However, standards in mathematics and science are not as high as those in English, although they are improving in both of these subjects. Through its self-evaluation, which is satisfactory, the school has identified weaknesses in the teaching of both mathematics and science, and there are suitable plans to rectify these. The school has kept an eye on pupils' progress in English and mathematics for many years, and taken the necessary steps when it has found weaknesses; however an increase this year in the frequency of checks has enabled it to make more timely intervention. The school has not collected assessment information on pupils' progress in science and so it has not until recently found that pupils do not develop their investigative skills as well as they do their scientific knowledge. Teachers responsible for leading other subjects do not collect assessment information, so they do not know how well pupils are doing or whether all pupils make similar progress. Although the school has improved its provision for information and communication technology (ICT) since the last inspection, it cannot demonstrate that standards in the subject have risen.

The quality of teaching and learning, the curriculum and care, guidance and support is satisfactory. Monitoring and support enable teachers to improve their practice, but not all subject leaders observe lessons. The school has inevitably had to rely on supply teachers to cover staff absence through illness or whilst recruiting. It is fortunate to have a number of teachers who know the school and its pupils well. Nonetheless, pupils find changes unsettling and several parents expressed concern about the school's frequent use of supply teachers. Inspectors found their teaching to be at least satisfactory. With local authority support, the school has introduced the use of targets in English and mathematics, and this has helped to accelerate pupils' progress. Standards in English and mathematics have also been raised by the increase in opportunities for pupils to write in all subjects and the introduction of a daily 'number crackers' session, which pupils particularly enjoy. Staff are reviewing plans for science, to make sure that pupils steadily develop their investigative skills.

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. Their behaviour is good, and their attendance is satisfactory. Most of them enjoy coming to school. They are taught how to keep healthy and safe and they make a good contribution to school life and to the life of the local and wider

communities. They leave school with average standards in basic skills and are well able to work with others.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by addressing the weaknesses identified in the teaching of these subjects
- Extend the roles of subject leaders to include the monitoring of standards and provision
- Broaden the scope of assessment beyond English and mathematics to ensure that pupils who are not making expected progress are identified early.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 3**

Overall standards were below average in most years following the last inspection. In 2005 there was a considerable dip in Year 6 standards; pupils did not progress well enough and their achievements were inadequate. The school responded by focussing attention mainly on improving the breadth and quality of pupils' writing, with some success. Standards recovered again in 2006 and were broadly average overall, mainly due to considerable improvement in English. Progress and achievement in science also improved a little in 2006, although pupils' scientific enquiry skills were, and are still, a relative weakness. However, mathematics standards did not improve at the same rate and too many pupils did not reach the expected level 4 standard. Local authority intensive support began in 2006, action to improve further both English and mathematics this year is beginning to show an impact. Standards are currently broadly average in both English and mathematics. Most pupils are achieving satisfactorily and the school is on course to exceed its targets, although school tracking data shows that a few lower attaining pupils are still not making as much progress as they should.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 3**

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem, as their efforts and achievements are recognised and celebrated. School rules are well known and respected, and behaviour is good. The school is successful in helping pupils who find it difficult to maintain consistently good behaviour. Pupils enjoy coming to school and many take part regularly in extra curricular activities. They particularly enjoy the daily 'number crackers' sessions, but are less enthusiastic about weekly 'golden time', which some find repetitious. Many make healthy choices, at break and lunchtimes, although there are a few pupils who regularly bring crisps, cake and chocolate bars in lunchboxes. Pupils know how to keep safe at school and outside. The school has developed its provision for pupils' cultural awareness, so pupils are tolerant of differences and respect one another. A number of pupils willingly take on responsibility in school, as playground pals or school councillors, for instance. They also join the local community at events such as well dressing and they raise funds for those less fortunate both at home and abroad. Their satisfactory literacy, numeracy and ICT skills as well as their ability to work with others provides a sound grounding for future working life.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching, learning and assessment are satisfactory. There is some good teaching, more consistently so in English. Most pupils are keen to learn and behave well in lessons because relationships are good. The contexts and planned activities that are chosen engage pupils' interest and involvement and teachers use ICT well, to enhance and illustrate discussions. A current priority is rightly to tackle weaknesses in pupils' acquisition of basic numeracy skills. This has been supported by staff training and the introduction of some highly enjoyable daily 'number crackers' sessions are helping to improve pupils' basic skills. Lessons are appropriately challenging for most pupils' abilities in these mixed age classes. However, in a few mathematics lessons, lower attaining pupils who are not supported by teaching assistants fail to complete tasks before moving on. Insufficient use is made of learning aids that would help them to grasp key mathematical concepts more visually. Assessment is now being used more effectively and is one reason why standards are improving.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 3

The curriculum is satisfactory. The school has worked to enrich the curriculum and make learning more enjoyable and relevant in recent years; for example, through themed weeks and a programme of out of school visits. The use of ICT across subjects, a weakness at the last inspection, is much improved and helping pupils to research, communicate and to learn. Pupils also now write extensively in different contexts and writing styles across subjects, which has successfully helped to raise standards of literacy. Staff have adapted the curriculum to address weaknesses in pupils' acquisition of numeracy skills, by adding an enjoyable daily mental mathematics session, and planning in science is being revised to ensure that it develops more systematically pupils' scientific enquiry skills.

There is a satisfactory range of additional activities provided, including music and sports and a residential visit that helps pupils to become independent and confident individuals and to develop team working skills. A planned programme of personal, social and health education encourages pupils to make healthy life choices and know how to stay safe.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 3

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pupils feel safe in school and say that they have someone to turn to if they have a problem. Good support for pupils with behaviour difficulties, including positive play sessions and lots of praise from staff, help pupils to achieve more consistently good behaviour. The school has constructive links with external agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties.

Monitoring of pupils' progress is well established in English and mathematics and enables the school to identify which pupils need extra support; it is more frequent this year and this is proving effective. However, data is not yet being collected in other subjects, although a start has been made in science. The introduction of target setting has helped to accelerate pupils' progress. Targets are included in home-school link books, so parents can help their children at home, and they appreciate this. The use of targets is better developed in English than in

mathematics. Marking is satisfactory; it is best in English, where pupils are given helpful prompts and involved in self-review. Occasionally, written work in other subjects is ticked when there are errors that should be corrected.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Following a period of staffing difficulties, staff morale is good and they are working as a team to raise standards, with evident success. The great majority of parents are positive about the school.

The headteacher and his deputy work constructively together, each working to his strengths, and other staff with key responsibilities are beginning to extend their roles so that they contribute to the monitoring of standards and provision. Self-evaluation involves all that it should and the school is responsive to constructive criticism. The process correctly identifies the school's strengths and weaknesses and informs the improvement plan. However, this document, which was drawn up in the headteacher's absence, has too much in it and does not focus sharply enough on the most immediate priorities, or show the role of subject leaders in school improvement.

Governance is satisfactory. There have been several changes recently in the composition of the governing body and new governors need training, which is being addressed. Experienced members are clear about what needs to be done and governors carry out adequately their role in holding the school to account. The school has a satisfactory capacity for further improvements.

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## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> 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 disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	2
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	3
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

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

<sup>1</sup> 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.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	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 performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
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	3
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

25 April 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wirksworth Junior School, Wirksworth, Derbyshire, DE4 4FD

Thank you for making us welcome in your school. We came to see how well you are all getting on and whether there are any things that could be done to make your school better.

We found that you are getting on well enough in English, mathematics and science and were pleased to hear that most of you enjoy coming to school. We also found that you develop well enough as young people. Most of you behave well, and we were impressed with the way that you get involved in school life, in local events and raise money for charities in England and less fortunate children in Africa. We agree with you that the 'number crackers' sessions are fun. They are helping you to improve your numeracy skills too. It was good to hear that you feel safe in school, and that you are learning how to lead healthy lives. In lessons, we saw you working well in pairs and groups, and this will help you to get on with others in later life. Some of your parents wrote to say that they are concerned that so many different teachers take your lessons, and you told us that you find this unsettling. We found that the teaching is fine; sometimes it is good. Staff in school are all working together to improve things for you, and already you are doing better in your writing. Having targets, that you and your parents know, is helping.

The staff know what needs to be done to make your school a good one. We have asked them to make sure that you reach higher standards in mathematics and science. A few of you need learning aids to help you understand certain things in mathematics. Teachers are going to give you more opportunities to improve your investigation skills in science. They are also going to find out how well you are taught and collect information about how well you are doing in all subjects. That way, they will be able to see who needs more help to do really well. You can help by doing your best to reach your targets and attending school well.

With best wishes for the future,

S. Aldridge (Lead Inspector)