

Woodcock Hill Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	103372
Local Authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	308297
Inspection dates	6–7 March 2008
Reporting inspector	David Driscoll

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	4
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Neale
Headteacher	Bernard Moore
Date of previous school inspection	1 April 2005
School address	Farwood Road Northfield Birmingham B31 1BS
Telephone number	01216 754130
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This smaller than average primary school serves an urban area on the edge of Birmingham. A very high proportion of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from a minority ethnic background is above average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language, although almost all are fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is very high, and the proportion with a statement of special educational need is above average.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Woodcock provides a satisfactory education for its pupils. Pupils' overall progress through the school is at the rate expected and they achieve satisfactorily but, because they join with standards that are well below average, they also leave with standards that are well below average. Pupils' progress varies from year to year and from subject to subject. In the Foundation Stage, progress is satisfactory in most areas of learning, although it is good in physical development and a little slower in language and literacy. In other years, pupils might make good progress in mathematics, for example, but slower progress in English. The situation will then be reversed the following year, so pupils catch up in English but lose ground in mathematics. This variation is a result of teaching which, while satisfactory as a whole, is inconsistent. With the exception of the good relationships between pupils and teachers, there are few strengths or areas for improvement that are consistent throughout the school. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT), because they get lots of opportunities to use computers. In other respects, the curriculum is satisfactory. The school has made several recent improvements to the curriculum in English and mathematics, but these have not yet been in place long enough to have had a major impact on standards. However, pupils are often over reliant on their teachers, as they lack confidence and do not have enough opportunities to work independently. Pupils' personal development is satisfactory, as a result of sound care, guidance and support. Pupils much enjoy being in school, because they generally get on well with one another and feel very safe and secure. Their attendance is inadequate. Some parents do not support the school's work in attempting to improve attendance, which is unsatisfactory chiefly because so many parents take their children on holiday during term-time. Others are not as aware of the school's concerns because their child's attendance is just above 90%, and so they are not targeted for support. The school has made steady progress since it was last inspected, as a result of satisfactory leadership and management. Targets are realistic, but not particularly challenging. The systems for checking the quality of what the school provides give senior managers and governors a clear picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This enables them to draw up well thought out plans for improvement. However, the actions taken are not always as effective as they should be, because their implementation is not checked quickly enough. So, some staff may be fully implementing a policy or new initiative, while others are not. When all staff consistently implement a policy, the effects can be dramatic. Standards of presentation, for example, have improved significantly, as all staff have concentrated on this aspect of pupils' work. Such an example clearly demonstrates that the school's managers have the skills necessary to take the school forward.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Teachers in the Foundation Stage have created a bright, attractive learning environment in which children feel safe and secure. Children usually start in the Reception class with skill levels that are well below those expected for their age. They make progress at the expected rate, which means that standards remain well below average at the start of Year 1. Teaching and the curriculum are satisfactory. There is an appropriate balance of activities led by teachers and those initiated by the children. Good opportunities are provided for children to improve their physical development through the use of the outdoor environment. However, the marking of children's literacy work is not always accurate, so cannot be used to plan the next stage in their learning. This means that sometimes pupils are given the same work that they have previously

covered, or given work for which they are not yet ready. Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are satisfactory. The main areas for improvement have been identified, and appropriate actions are being taken to address them.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve the achievement of pupils across the school by ensuring that all teaching is of a consistently good quality and that pupils have more opportunities to work independently.
- Improve attendance by targeting support at a greater number of pupils and their parents.
- Improve leadership and management by ensuring that the effectiveness of initiatives is checked more quickly. 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

In most years, children join the Foundation Stage with skills that are well below those expected for their age. They make the expected progress in all years, but standards on leaving Year 6 remain well below average. There are some differences from year to year. The pupils currently in Year 1, for example, were a much more able group when they started school, and their standards are above average. The pupils who left Year 6 last year did so with exceptionally low standards, because they did not do well enough while they were in Year 6, as their teacher left early in the year. Although the reasons for last year's underachievement have been overcome, and all groups of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress, there are some significant variations in progress between subjects and years that affect all groups. For example, pupils make good progress in mathematics in Year 5, but their progress in English is slower, while the situation is reversed in Year 6. This leads to pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, forging ahead in a subject in one year, then falling back a little, while they make good progress in another. One consistent strength is pupils' good progress in ICT, where standards are average by the time they leave school. The school has made improving pupils' presentation skills a focus for its work recently. This has had a huge impact. Written work is often beautifully presented, and calculations laid out in such a way as to make clear exactly what steps the pupil has worked through.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 3

Pupils much like being in school and feel particularly safe. They are also proud of what their school provides for them. As one pupil said, 'Woodcock Hill should be proud of what it does. Look at the awards wall with our certificates. That proves everything.' Despite their good enjoyment, pupils' attendance remains inadequate, mainly because so many families take holidays during school time. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils usually behave well in lessons, but at breaks can become boisterous and not do as they are told to by lunchtime supervisors. Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of regular exercise and are very clear about the foods they should eat to stay healthy. They put this understanding into practice, only ever eating healthy snacks at breaktimes, for example. Pupils have a good understanding of how to play a responsible role in the community. The school council is active and pupils take their decision making role seriously. Pupils have also taken part in a debate in the Birmingham City Council chamber, but in lessons

they lack confidence and are often too quick to seek help rather than persevere with a task. Pupils' preparation for the next stages of their lives is satisfactory overall. They make sound and in several respects good gains in their personal qualities and become adept in the use of ICT, although they lag behind most pupils in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Throughout the school, teachers get on well with their pupils, who are quick to volunteer to answer questions that make them think hard about the topic they are learning. In all other respects, the picture is one of variation across the school. In one class, the tasks will be demanding for all groups of pupils, but the pace will be slow because they are given too much time to complete them. In another class, the pace is brisk, but the work is a bit too easy for the most able. Some teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, gently nudging them in the right direction by asking questions that help pupils get to an answer without too much help. In other cases, the teaching assistant does the work for the pupil. These inconsistencies lead to the variations in progress that are apparent in different classes and subjects.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

The provision for literacy and numeracy has been satisfactory but not good enough to help pupils catch up with national standards. Several changes have been made to the English and mathematics curriculum, but these are too new to really show any great benefits as yet, although there are some encouraging signs of improving achievement. In all years, pupils are given many opportunities to use ICT. This not only improves their standards in ICT, but also builds upon their obvious enjoyment of using computers. In contrast, pupils do not get enough opportunities to develop their independence. Even when solving problems, for example, they rely heavily on support from the teacher, which does not help to improve their confidence in their own abilities.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 3

'I have never felt alone here' is the view of one pupil, which sums up the effectiveness of the care provided for pupils. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are robust and frequent risk assessments are carried out. Links with parents are satisfactory. Some parents do not support the work of the school, disagreeing with the school's efforts to promote healthy eating. Others do not heed the strong warnings given by the school regarding the impact on a child's education of taking holidays during term-time. The school could still do more by way of reminding parents about the importance of regular attendance. It targets support for those whose attendance falls below 90%, when the benchmark could be higher. The school makes good use of its links with outside agencies to support pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Academic guidance is satisfactory. In some classes, pupils are given individual short-term targets that tell them what to aim for, and how to improve. In others, the targets are too general and applied to the whole class.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future, and when all staff pull together in consistently implementing a policy, such as that on improving the presentation of work, the results can be remarkable. However, this example is the exception rather than the rule. In other areas there is too much variation in provision, as the school's managers sometimes wait too long before checking that improvements are being carried out. The same is true of governors. They were quick to hold the school to account for the underachievement in Year 6 in 2007, but have not yet checked that the plans put in place are proving effective. Nevertheless, the school's managers accurately evaluate the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. The priorities for improvement are well targeted at the most important areas. Senior and middle managers carry out frequent checks on the quality of teaching, but these do not always make the link between what the teacher does, and how effective this is in helping the pupils to learn.

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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?	3
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	3
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 disabilities make progress	3

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	2
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	4
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 the 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?	3

¹ 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

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 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

10 March 2008 Dear Children Inspection of Woodcock Hill Infant and Junior School, Birmingham, B31 1BS Thank you for telling us about your school and helping us during our visit. We found that you are getting a satisfactory education, and learning as quickly as we would expect you to. In some classes, you do well in your maths, but not so well in your English. Then, when you move class, you do well in English, but not so well in maths. What would be really good is if you did well all the time in all your subjects. So, we have asked the people who run the school to make sure that all your lessons are as good as the best ones. We were very impressed by the progress you have made in your ICT skills and how much effort you put into making your work as neat as possible. Some of it was absolutely beautiful. You told us that you really like coming to school, because you get on well with your teachers. Some of you do not come often enough though, mainly because you have holidays when you should be at school. We have asked the people who run the school to remind more of your mums and dads to send you to school whenever possible, but you can help too. Remind them how important it is for you to come to school, so you do not fall behind in your work. You clearly know a lot about how to stay fit and healthy. You usually behave well in lessons, but some of you do not always do as you are told at break or lunchtime, which is silly because you know the grown-ups are only making sure that nobody gets hurt. The people who run the school know what they have to do to make it better. They find out which things most need improving, and then they do something about them. We have asked them to check more quickly that what they are doing to improve the school is working. With all best wishes for your futures. David Driscoll Lead inspector

10 March 2008

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With all best wishes for your futures.

David Driscoll
Lead inspector