

Woodcroft First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124152
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	359594
Inspection dates	24–25 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Davis

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	200
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Anne Knobbs
Headteacher	Ruth Cartlidge
Date of previous school inspection	17 January 2008
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Age group	4–9
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They observed 15 lessons and all 7 teachers. Inspectors held meetings with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, staff, and groups of parents. They observed the school's work and looked at policies, development planning, data related to the tracking of pupils' progress, senior leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning, safeguarding documents, minutes of the governing body, pupils' work and 74 questionnaires from parents and carers, together with those from pupils and staff.

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

- It explored the learning and progress of groups of pupils in current classes, and investigated how effectively leaders have addressed the recent decline in attainment at Key Stage 1, particularly the underperformance of pupils of highest ability and the gap between the performance of boys and girls.
- It looked at how well pupils understand their targets and how to improve their work.
- It evaluated how well the school promotes community cohesion and the impact of this on pupils' understanding of children from backgrounds different to their own.

Information about the school

Woodcroft First School is a smaller than average school of its type. The great majority of pupils are White British and there are very few pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is low. The school has Healthy school status, Eco School Green Flag award, Artsmark Gold and has been designated a Dyslexia Friendly School. A privately run pre-school, on the same site, and before and after school clubs, which use the same buildings, were not part of this inspection.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Woodcroft First School is a good school. Pupils enjoy their learning and say that they are well known and cared for and that the school teaches them how to keep themselves safe. As a result they have an outstanding understanding of safety issues. Parents and carers are very positive about all aspects of the school's work. "I think this school is wonderful and does a great job of supporting children's individual needs' and, 'My child looks forward to school each day and is excited about learning'. These are typical of comments they made.

Attainment by the end of Year 4 is steadily rising, particularly in writing, and is now above average, although attainment in mathematics is average. Leaders are addressing this using a variety of strategies including daily opportunities across the school to practise problems using mental mathematics. This is now having an impact in promoting enjoyment and accelerating progress. Pupils enjoy their learning and behave well in lessons, particularly when outstanding teaching engrosses them in a task. They particularly enjoyed dance lessons as part of Arts Week and have an outstanding understanding about how such physical activity keeps them healthy. Pupils also make a considerable contribution to the delightful school grounds, having designed the allotment area where they grow produce. Older pupils care for younger ones and enjoy taking responsible roles. These include having an extensive voice in the running of the school and organising community events such as the arts festival in conjunction with other local schools. They are welcoming to the very few pupils who join the school at an early stage of learning English and quickly involve them at playtime.

Warm relationships are evident in all classes and, as a result, pupils are keen to do well and display positive attitudes to learning. They show excitement about the range of active and creative tasks that are set for them, for example, rehearsing and performing poetry expressively and responding to other pupils' suggestions about how they could improve. Teachers generally plan well to meet the needs of individual abilities in each class, although opportunities are sometimes missed to fully challenge those of highest ability. Teaching assistants are used very well to support learning while at the same time encouraging pupils to become independent learners. Some teaching observed was outstanding and in these lessons pupils worked at a fast pace and were fully engaged in their tasks, building progressively on their prior learning during the lesson. Teachers here continually probe understanding by asking challenging questions, having high expectations of what their pupils can achieve. In some lessons the pace of learning occasionally slows because pupils are given too

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long to complete a task or the task is not explained clearly enough for them to make a quick start. The curriculum provides many opportunities for pupils to explore a range of topics that inspire them to write about subjects that are relevant and appropriate to their experience. Spanish is taught across the school and has a high profile, including enabling pupils to correspond with children at a Spanish school. The school cares for its pupils well. Parents and carers are very positive about the way their children are enabled to settle quickly when they start in the Reception class.

The headteacher is supported by a strong team who share her ambition and drive for improvement. The school knows its strengths and weaknesses well and is quick to identify and act upon any areas of underachievement. Good support has been provided to ensure that middle leaders have the appropriate skills to effectively monitor teaching in their areas of responsibility and to identify and respond to training needs. Although the tracking of pupils' progress is regular and robust and the progress of individual pupils is well monitored, assessment information is not always clearly expressed. Hence, leaders do not always have a clear enough overview of trends in performance to inform the evaluation of the impact of provision on pupil outcomes. Although safeguarding practice is outstanding, ensuring that all pupils are safe, systems for monitoring and evaluating related policies lack clarity. Leaders have effectively sustained the level of effectiveness since the previous inspection and have improved pupil outcomes. They show a good capacity to sustain these improvements.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further raise attainment and accelerate the pace of learning by:
 - making sure that tasks are always explained fully to pupils and that they are not given too much time to complete tasks
 - increasing the level of challenge, particularly for those of highest ability, so that they are able to reach their potential.
- Refine processes for tracking the progress of pupils to better enable leaders to evaluate the impact of provision on pupil outcomes and establish clearer systems for monitoring and evaluating policies and procedures.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils generally enter the Reception classes with skills that are broadly average in most areas of learning although communication and language skills are lower. They make good progress from their starting points and generally attain above average standards by the end of Key Stage 1. Pupils continue to make good progress across Years 3 and 4 and increasing numbers are reaching higher levels. They cooperate well in group and paired work and support each other in their learning. In the best lessons, pupils show excitement, for example when Year 2 pupils explained what they understood about keeping their teeth clean and then designed leaflets or wrote poems to encourage people to look after their teeth. Pupils respond well to

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opportunities for them to take decisions about tasks and to develop independent learning skills. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities make equal progress to their peers as a result of the good level of support that they receive. There is no difference in the performance between boys and girls or the performance of different groups of pupils.

Pupils' extensive contribution to the school and wider community includes the Eco Squad, members of which take their responsibilities seriously, ensuring that natural resources are not wasted by the daily checking of each classroom. Pupils plan the annual 'cream tea' where they cook and sell teas to parents, handling the budget themselves. This type of business and enterprise activity, together with their good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, their confident personal skills and above-average attendance prepare them well for their future economic well-being. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong and each class decides on their classroom rules. They understand and value the importance of abiding by these and ensuring that any of their privilege time is not lost. Although pupils have little first hand experience of children from different ethnic backgrounds, they have a good understanding of different beliefs and celebrations. They enjoy respond well to works of art explaining why they like them.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
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	2
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	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

The large majority of teaching observed during the inspection was good or better

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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with a high degree of consistent practice across the school. Resources are well prepared to enrich learning. Tasks set are appropriate to pupils’ understanding and appeal to their imagination. Occasionally, in group work, teachers concentrate on a small group of pupils and have insufficient overview of the learning of the whole class. They then fail to notice soon enough when there is misunderstanding or pupils are not concentrating. Most teachers use questioning well to probe understanding and evaluate the learning taking place, enabling them to provide extra challenge and foster independent learning. For example, in a Spanish lesson, where pupils were learning how to describe different flavours of ice cream, pupils were challenged to be adventurous and work out how to describe flavours that they did not already know. Pupils know their targets and marking of their work consistently explains how to improve, providing opportunities to respond to teachers’ comments and to assess themselves against their targets.

The curriculum is well adapted to meet the needs of pupils. The provision for information and communication technology is good. Interactive whiteboards are used by teachers to enhance learning and opportunities are provided for pupils to use them to demonstrate their answers. The curriculum includes many opportunities for creativity and arts week activities include an artist in residence and chances to study the work by famous artists, including experimenting with key elements of their technique. A study of the history of their town inspired the school show, celebrating the last forty years of the school. There is a good range of clubs and enrichment opportunities including visits by the fire service, supporting pupils’ understanding of how to keep themselves safe. A mathematics club provides support and exciting activities designed to engage different groups of pupils, and special games sessions aimed at boys and girls are well supported. Violin, cello and recorder lessons are provided by specialist teachers.

Transition arrangements between key stages are well planned, including an extended transition project and induction visits, preparing pupils well for their entry to middle school. Parents are closely involved in the individual programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, which focus on promoting not only academic progress, but also social, physical and emotional development by planning small steps to success. The school can point to the significant impact its actions have had in promoting the learning for pupils whose circumstances may make them vulnerable, involving a range of external agencies. Specialist support has enabled teachers to support pupils with dyslexia has enhanced the special educational needs provision including providing a dyslexia workshop for parents. Attendance rates have remained above average for a sustained period as a result of the support provided for children and their families.

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

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

The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The head teacher and her team have successfully engendered a strong and harmonious school community where adults lead by example in the care they show. Action planning is clearly focused on raising achievement and pupil outcomes. There has been a successful focus on driving up the quality of teaching and developing other areas of provision, particularly to address areas where weakness has been identified. For example the introduction of 'Big Write' has resulted in improving quality of writing across the school and consistent assessment processes have been established. Teachers are held to account for the progress of their classes through regular progress meetings. The governing body shows strong commitment to the school and members bring a wide range of expertise to their role. They seek the opinion of parents, react positively to their suggestions and hold the school's leaders to account. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding. Procedures including risk assessments are very thorough hence ensuring the safety of pupils. Child protection procedures and record keeping are secure.

The school communicates with parents and carers through a variety of media and operates an open door policy welcoming them to discuss issues of concern. A mathematics week is provided in which parents and carers can experience current methods of teaching mathematics alongside their children in order that they can learn how to support their learning at home. A wide range of partnerships with other schools enable curriculum support, particularly in art, Spanish and sport. The school ensures that its work is at the heart of the community and seeks opportunities to welcome the community into the school. Links with a Spanish school provide a good international dimension. The school recognises that pupils have little first-hand experience of the ethnic diversity across Britain and are currently addressing this and providing many opportunities through the curriculum to study other cultures and faiths. The school promotes equality of opportunity well and evaluates the performance and participation of different groups of pupils. This ensures that all are included and that there is no discrimination.

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	2

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The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
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

The Early Years Foundation Stage provides a light, airy and inspiring setting and children enjoy their learning. They make good progress and are confident and imaginative in all they do. They are able to work independently and understand classroom routines such as washing their hands and moving around safely. Children enjoy being able to choose from a variety of fruit provided and exercise sessions are planned well encouraging the adoption of a healthy lifestyle. Relationships are positive and children understand the importance of sharing and taking turns. They are encouraged to ask questions and be curious. Adult support is focused well on individual needs and progress towards learning goals is carefully recorded, informing teachers' planning for next steps in learning. This ensures that every child is appropriately challenged. Leaders have established a safe environment and excellent partnership with parents. Good teamwork is evident and there is a common sense of purpose. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has established very effective curriculum links with Key Stage 1 to ensure that skills, particularly in literacy can be built upon as children move up through the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Those parents and carers who responded were overwhelmingly positive with 100% agreeing that their children enjoy school and that the school keeps their children safe. A very few parents asked for more information about their child's progress or for more opportunity to speak to their child's teacher. Inspection evidence indicates that the school provides well in this area and seeks to engage parents and carers in the work of the school.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Woodcroft First 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 74 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 200 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	47	64	27	36	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	57	77	17	23	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	36	49	36	49	1	1	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	36	49	33	45	4	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	40	54	32	43	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	32	43	40	54	1	1	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	40	54	30	41	2	3	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)	34	47	32	44	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	37	51	32	44	0	0	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	37	51	32	44	1	1	1	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	36	37	51	3	3	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	44	59	27	36	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	46	62	27	36	1	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 31 December 2010 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.



26 May 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Woodcroft First School, Leek, ST13 8JG

Thank you very much for the welcome you gave to me and my colleagues when we visited the school for its recent inspection. We enjoyed talking with you and seeing all that you do. We particularly enjoyed seeing all the arts week activities.

Our inspection has judged that you go to a good school. The care that the school provides for you is good and, as a result you feel very safe and know how to keep yourselves safe. The standards that you reach are steadily rising, and overall are currently above those typical of pupils your age but we feel that teachers can help you do even better. You behave well, particularly when teachers provide exciting tasks for you to do. You enjoy your lessons and all the activities that are provided for you, including all the clubs, music and sport. You told us that you enjoy sporting activities and we think that you have an outstanding understanding of how to stay healthy. Most of your teachers provide lessons that are fun and interesting but some of you told us that you sometimes find the work too easy and so we have asked teachers to challenge you more. You know your targets and you told us that teachers always tell you how to improve your work. You make an outstanding contribution to your school community, including the Eco Squad and the ways in which you have planned improvements to the lovely outside area. You are polite and welcoming to visitors and kind and considerate to those around you. You have a good understanding of different religious celebrations. All of you get on well together and support pupils who are at an early stage of learning English, ensuring that they are quickly included in school life.

The leaders of the school are working hard to make sure you learn well and develop well as young people. We have asked them to ensure that they continue to check how well you are progressing towards your targets to make sure you all do well. You can help them by continuing to work hard. I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mary Davis
Lead inspector

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