

Woodhall Primary School

Woodhall Lane, South Oxhey, Watford, Hertfordshire WD19 6QX

Inspection dates

26–27 February 2019

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Although standards are improving, pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics remains below the national average by the end of key stage 2.
- Systems around self-evaluation and action planning are not fully developed. As a result, the school is not improving as quickly as it could do.
- Leaders' monitoring of the quality of teaching does not have sufficient impact. Teaching is less than good because some teachers' expectations, including of pupils' behaviour, are not high enough.
- Subject leaders are new to their roles. They have not yet had any demonstrable impact on improving standards in the subjects that they are responsible for.
- Phonics is not taught consistently well. Some staff lack the strong subject knowledge necessary to teach phonics well.
- Leaders have not developed a whole-school approach to how reading will be taught.
- Pupils are sometimes given books to read that are not well matched to their ability. The school has too few good-quality reading books.
- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the school has a broad and balanced curriculum. It is too narrow. Pupils do not make strong progress in subjects other than English and mathematics, because they spend too little time learning about these subjects.
- Governors do not have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their ability to hold leaders to account is limited.

The school has the following strengths

- While below the national average by the end of key stage 2, standards have improved year on year since the headteacher took up her post.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and friendly. Generally, they behave well in their classrooms and as they move about the school.
- The school caters for pupils' social, emotional and mental health needs particularly well. Pupils make very good progress in these key developmental areas.
- The early years provision has improved greatly since the previous inspection. It now provides children with a good start to their education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, so that the school improves more rapidly, by ensuring that:
 - self-evaluation is analytical and action planning is precise
 - monitoring activity has a clear impact on improving the quality of teaching
 - the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced, so that pupils make good progress across a range of subjects
 - leaders have a demonstrable impact on improving standards in the subjects that they are responsible for
 - governors have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and challenge leaders appropriately.
- Improve the quality of teaching, so that more pupils make stronger progress and attainment rises to at least the national average, by ensuring that:
 - teaching is fully effective in all year groups
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave
 - grammar, punctuation and spelling are taught effectively.
- Raise attainment in reading by:
 - improving subject knowledge so that phonics teaching is of a consistently good quality
 - developing an effective whole-school approach to teaching reading
 - ensuring that pupils are provided with books to read that are well matched to their reading ability
 - ensuring that the school has an adequate stock of suitable books for pupils to read.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Leaders and governors have not ensured that the quality of teaching is at least good throughout the school. As a result, pupils do not make consistently strong progress in a wide range of subjects, including English and mathematics.
- The school's curriculum is narrow and underdeveloped. Leaders have rightly prioritised improving pupils' outcomes in reading, writing and mathematics, but this has been to the detriment of other subjects. Pupils are not provided with a rich and exciting educational diet, particularly in Year 6. This affects how interested they are in their learning, how well they behave and how much they know about a range of subjects.
- Processes around self-evaluation and action planning are underdeveloped. The school's self-evaluation is too descriptive. Leaders have not analysed what works well and what still needs to improve. This means that the school's strengths and weaknesses are not identified clearly enough and action planning lacks precision. This slows the rate of progress in improving the school.
- Similarly, systems around improving the quality of teaching are not fully effective. Leaders monitor the quality of teaching by, for example, observing teaching in classrooms, but the impact of this monitoring is not strong. Where weaknesses in the quality of teaching are noted during one observation, these are not followed up in subsequent visits to classrooms. This limits the impact leaders have on improving the effectiveness of teachers' practice.
- Leaders are ambitious for the school. They want the very best for pupils and are determined that they will achieve it. Leaders have had a clear and demonstrable impact on improving some aspects of the school's work. For example, outcomes have improved steadily for the past three years and early years provision is now good.
- Leaders are doing everything in their power to mitigate difficulties in recruiting high-quality teaching staff. For example, they attend recruitment fairs and work with the local authority and initial teacher training providers. However, they frequently receive few or even no applications for advertised posts. This is making it more difficult for leaders to ensure that the quality of teaching in the school is at least good.
- Leaders focus extremely well on pupils' social, emotional and mental health. The provision for these aspects of pupils' development is a strength of the school. Leaders understand the needs of the local community very well. This has helped them to make the school a safe haven for many pupils, and sometimes their parents too.
- Subject leadership is starting to develop. Staff have been appointed to lead different areas of the curriculum. However, most are too new to their roles for there to be any demonstrable impact of their work.
- Leaders have recognised that the curriculum needs to be overhauled, and there are early signs that they are starting to address this. For example, leaders have started to think about their rationale for developing the curriculum, in terms of what they want pupils to know and to have done by the time they leave the school.

- The sport premium is used effectively. Funding is used to increase the range of sports, clubs and activities available to pupils. For example, pupils have been given opportunities to try boxing and badminton. Specialist coaches have been employed to work with pupils in order to improve teachers' knowledge about how to teach aspects of physical education.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is increasingly well developed. Leaders commissioned a review of how the pupil premium grant is spent to help them to identify what was working well and what could be improved. Leaders are taking action to improve the areas identified by the review.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) is led well. Leaders ensure that staff identify pupils' additional needs at an early stage and that suitable measures are put in place to address these needs quickly. Leaders check that these measures are helping pupils to make better progress and change them when they are not.
- Parents and carers are very happy with the school. They told inspectors how much they appreciate the support they are given by leaders and staff. Parents described the school as a friendly and welcoming place, where their children are safe and happy. Almost all parents who responded to Parent View said that they would recommend the school to others.

Governance of the school

- Governors do not have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They think the school is better than it is. This limits their ability to be objective in their strategic leadership of the school.
- Governors do not challenge leaders well. They accept the information they are given too readily. They do not ask probing questions to find out more about the information they are given. For example, the headteacher provides governors with information about pupils' outcomes but governors do not ask challenging questions to check whether this means that outcomes are good enough.
- Governors are committed to the school. They want the school to continue to improve and for it to become good or better. Governors are keen to develop their knowledge and skills to enable them to be more effective in their roles. Governors are very supportive of the school and fulfil this aspect of their role well.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's single central record of pre-appointment checks meets current requirements. Strong systems are in place for ensuring that only suitable people are employed to work with pupils.
- The school uses an electronic system to record child-protection concerns. Leaders have recently improved the way this system is used so that the actions taken in response to concerns are now clear. Records show that the school's designated safeguarding lead takes prompt and effective action to protect pupils, where necessary.

- The strength of the relationships between adults and pupils helps to keep pupils safe. Staff know pupils very well. They are alert to the small changes in pupils' behaviour that might indicate abuse or neglect.
- Pupils know that they can speak to any adult and that they will be listened to. Pupils rightly have great confidence that staff will help them when difficulties arise. This means that pupils are more likely to tell staff about things that concern them, giving staff the opportunity to take the right action to support or protect them.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Teaching has not been of a consistently good quality over time. Too much teaching is inconsistent, and this is having a negative impact on pupils' outcomes. Currently, neither of the upper key stage 2 classes has a permanent teacher. Both are being taught by short-term supply teachers, which creates instability.
- Teachers' expectations of what pupils are capable of are too variable. Some teachers have high expectations of pupils. As a result, pupils' outcomes are stronger and they make better progress. Where teachers' expectations are lower, pupils make less progress and their attainment is lower as a result.
- Some teaching staff do not manage pupils' behaviour well. Their expectations of how pupils should behave are too low and they do not insist that pupils listen carefully and work hard. Where this is the case, there is some low-level disruption in classrooms.
- The teaching of reading is variable, and this weakens the progress that pupils make. In some classes, pupils are given books to read that are too easy or too hard for them. Some of the school's reading books are very old and unappealing, and do not encourage pupils to want to read. The school's approach to the teaching of reading is not fully developed and this limits the progress that some pupils make.
- The quality of phonics teaching is also variable. Some staff do not have the level of subject knowledge necessary to enable them to teach phonics well. Phonics sessions are not explicit enough and do not give pupils sufficient opportunities to practise and apply new skills.
- Staff focus on developing pupils' spoken language skills. As well as taking advantage of opportunities that come up by chance, staff plan specific activities to extend pupils' knowledge and understanding of vocabulary. These activities are working well and their impact is evident in pupils' speech, and in their use and understanding of a wider range of words in their reading and writing.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers expect pupils to behave well and try hard. Pupils respond to these expectations. Where this is the case, classrooms are orderly and productive places where pupils achieve increasingly well.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Staff know and care for the pupils that they work with. Pupils feel supported, in terms both of their academic development and their emotional needs. This is particularly so for the most vulnerable pupils, who are supported extremely effectively.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are polite, friendly and welcoming. They were keen to speak with inspectors and to tell them about their school and their work. Pupils are kind and respectful to adults and to their classmates.
- Pupils love their school. They feel happy and safe at Woodhall. The school is a very nurturing place, and pupils know that they can speak to any adult if they are worried or concerned about something in the school or at home.
- Pupils are taught about a range of ways to keep themselves safe. For example, they have regular fire drills. Pupils understand the importance of staying calm and responding quickly, so that they would know what to do if a real emergency were ever to arise.
- Pupils know about bullying and the forms it can take. They know that they should tell an adult if bullying should ever happen to them or to someone else. Pupils say that bullying does not happen often but, when it does, staff sort things out quickly.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- On the whole, pupils follow the school's rules closely. They behave sensibly in their classrooms, as they move around the school and during breaktimes. Pupils cooperate with each other and play happily together outside.
- Strong systems are now in place to monitor attendance, and action is taken when attendance is too low. These actions are starting to have a positive impact. Although there has been little change to the school's overall attendance rate, the proportion of pupils that are persistently absent from the school is now much lower.
- The attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with SEND has improved. In some individual cases, pupils' attendance has improved markedly as a result of the actions taken by the school. The school works very closely with outside agencies, such as the local authority's attendance officer, to ensure that individual pupils attend the school regularly and on time.
- The challenging behaviour of a small number of pupils is managed well. Individual programmes are put in place to support pupils and these are effective in reducing the frequency and seriousness of undesirable behaviour. The school works with a range of other professionals, such as the local authority's behaviour support service, to ensure that pupils' individual needs are met.
- There is a small amount of low-level disruption in some classes. This occurs when teaching is weaker. Where teaching is better, and expectations are higher, pupils behave well and work hard.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Pupils' attainment is too low. The proportion of pupils that reach the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of key stage 2 remains below the national average. Too few pupils make the very strong progress needed to enable them to catch up. Pupils' attainment in grammar, punctuation and spelling was well below the national average in 2018.
- The work in pupils' exercise books shows that standards remain below age-related expectations. Pupils' understanding of grammar is frequently underdeveloped for their age. Similarly, many pupils do not use punctuation accurately and make frequent spelling mistakes, often of common words.
- Attainment in key stage 1 is also below the national average. The proportion of Year 1 pupils that reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check remained below average in 2018.
- Pupils' progress is better than their attainment. Over the past three years, each group of Year 6 pupils has made similar progress to other pupils across the country in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' progress in subjects other than English and mathematics is weaker. The school's narrowed curriculum means that pupils do not get enough opportunities to learn about subjects such as history, geography, music and art. As a result, they do not develop the knowledge of these subjects that they should.
- The remaining low attainment belies the school's improving standards across the board over the past three years. For example, the proportion of key stage 2 pupils that have reached the expected standard in each of reading, writing and mathematics has risen year on year and is now approaching the national average from a very low point in 2016. Phonics screening check results show similar improvement.
- Pupils with SEND make good progress overall. Leaders track their progress from their individual starting points closely and use this information to help them put the right measures in place to support pupils. Pupils with SEND who have social and emotional difficulties make particularly good progress in these areas.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision was judged to require improvement at the previous inspection in May 2015. Leaders and governors have focused on improving this aspect of the school's provision. They have tackled the weaker areas and the early years provision is now a strength of the school.
- Many children join the school with skills and understanding that are well below what are typical of their age, particularly in language and communication. Children make good progress during their time in early years. The proportion of children that reach a good level of development by the end of the Reception Year is increasing and is edging closer to the national average.
- Staff focus on developing children's language skills. They use questioning to encourage children to talk and to extend the answers children give to questions. Staff look for and

take opportunities to broaden children's knowledge of vocabulary and to encourage them to use a greater range of words.

- Staff know the children very well. This enables them to meet children's individual needs. Children feel comfortable and secure in the early years, because relationships with adults are strong. For some children, school provides them with a place of calm in their otherwise turbulent lives.
- Staff have high expectations of how children should behave. They gently but firmly insist that children follow the school's rules and develop their ability to socialise successfully. As a result, children behave increasingly well and develop the skills they need to be successful learners. For example, children sustain their concentration and persevere with their choices, rather than flitting from place to place, during the parts of the day when they choose their own activities.
- The needs of children with SEND are identified early, and prompt action is taken to provide children with the support they need. This ensures that children with SEND get off to a good start and make good progress from their individual starting points.
- The teaching of phonics is improving. However, as is the case elsewhere in the school, phonics teaching is not consistently strong.
- Statutory requirements for the early years are met.

School details

Unique reference number	117194
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10058740

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	192
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Graham Denman
Headteacher	Michelle Lake
Telephone number	0208 428 3447
Website	www.woodhall.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@woodhall.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 May 2015

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up her substantive post in January 2018, having been acting headteacher since September 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching and learning over time. They observed parts of 24 lessons, some jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors looked closely at the work in pupils' exercise books. They listened to pupils read and talked to them about their work.
- Inspectors looked at a range of the school's documents, including assessment information. They checked the school's single central record of pre-appointment checks and documents relating to child protection.
- Meetings were held with school leaders, governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of pupils. Inspectors spoke informally with other pupils throughout the inspection.
- Inspectors spoke with parents as they brought their children to the school. They considered 14 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and 14 free-text comments. Inspectors also took note of the school's own parent survey, 38 responses to Ofsted's pupil survey and 16 responses to the staff survey.

Inspection team

Wendy Varney, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Keith Pullen

Ofsted Inspector

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