

Watchfield Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	123068
Local Authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	314477
Inspection dates	25–26 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Mike Thompson

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	254
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Sarah Green
Headteacher	Mrs Cynthia Jones
Date of previous school inspection	19 January 2004
School address	North Street Watchfield Swindon SN6 8SD
Telephone number	01793 782623
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Watchfield is an average-sized primary school located in the Vale of the White Horse, between Oxford and Swindon. However, it is quite untypical of the schools around it in that 80% of its roll is drawn from the children of students or staff at the nearby Defence Academy of the United Kingdom. There is a large number of international students at the academy, and at the time of the inspection the school population comprised pupils from 44 different countries, speaking 32 different home languages. The mobility of pupils is very high. On average, 50% either join or leave during the course of each year. About 30% arrive with little or no English. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is low. The majority of those identified have behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes in all year groups. The school holds a number of awards; most recently it gained the Activemark accreditation for its commitment to promoting physical exercise and school sport, the Healthy School award, and the Equality and Diversity award. An acting headteacher currently leads the school. A new headteacher has been appointed, but will not take up the post until September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Watchfield Primary is a good school. Its pupils achieve well because of good teaching and a carefully planned curriculum. The school's excellent partnership with parents and its close links with the Defence Academy, local schools and other professional agencies are used to very good effect in broadening pupils' horizons. Particularly noteworthy is the excellent way in which the cultural traditions of all pupils are respected and celebrated. These international links are highly valued by the parents, and a number of those who returned the inspection questionnaires made specific reference to this outstanding aspect of their children's education. One summarised these views well when commenting, 'The presence of the international children is a huge bonus; my children have made friends from all over the world, and the benefits that the international children and their families bring the school is wonderful.' Another added, 'It is one of the best examples of unity in diversity'.

An important factor in the school's success is the excellent atmosphere that encourages learning in all classes. Pupils' good behaviour and real desire to learn help overcome the difficulties sometimes encountered because of limited skills in the English language. The overseas pupils who come with English as a second language rapidly develop skills in speaking, reading and writing because of the high quality provision in the school's language unit. Skilled teaching assistants also play a key role in ensuring that those who need extra help are able to keep up with their classmates.

In all key stages, pupils make good progress. By the end of Year 6, standards in English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT) are above average. The school is not content with this situation and is constantly looking for ways to raise standards further. To do this, it is now focusing on developing closer links between subjects to help make learning even more relevant. However, the school realises that this initiative also requires a clear focus on the skills that pupils need to acquire, and acknowledges that this is not yet a consistent feature in its planning. In ICT, pupils do not use their skills on a day-to-day basis to help them learn in other subjects. This is because their use of computers is generally limited to the ICT suite. In lessons, the class computers are not used well enough as an integral part of learning.

Each child matters in this school. Everyone is warmly welcomed and equally valued. The school caters well for pupils' individual personal and social needs through its pastoral care systems; consequently, their personal development is good. Teachers give their pupils good quality help with their work and set them clear targets. However, teachers' marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and is not always linked to the targets they have set.

The leadership at all levels is good. Particularly noteworthy is the clear leadership of the acting headteacher, who has ensured that the school has developed rapidly under her stewardship. A hallmark of her leadership is the good teamwork evident among staff. The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. There is a very strong commitment to continuous improvement and robust systems are in place to help ensure that this happens; consequently, the school is well placed to improve further.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

The Foundation Stage Unit ensures a good start for children. It offers a colourful and welcoming environment where children's individual needs are recognised. Typically, children's skills are above what is normally expected when they start school. They make good progress and, by the time they enter Year 1, most reach the expected goals and many exceed them. The enthusiastic and dedicated teaching staff is led by an effective and well organised manager who makes good use of their individual strengths and ensures clear systems and good lines of communication. Teaching is good. The allocation of each child to a 'key worker' helps ensure that individual needs are quickly identified and met. The school ensures that children experience all of the required areas of learning through its indoor and outdoor provision, although at times some facilities are underused. Children respond well to each other and to adults. They understand daily routines and systems. As a result, they grow in confidence. However, the children are not always fully involved in taking responsibility for their own learning, and this holds back their personal development.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that planning places a greater emphasis on the skills that pupils need to acquire and provide better opportunities for pupils to use ICT as a daily, integral part of their learning.
- Ensure greater consistency in the teachers' marking of pupils' work.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Pupils achieve well irrespective of ethnicity or gender. Those in the early stages of learning English make excellent progress when withdrawn for high quality provision in the language unit. The school's monitoring shows that these overseas pupils with English as a second language are making better progress than in previous years. The school ascribes much of this improvement to the greater emphasis now placed on teaching letter sounds. The few pupils with behavioural or emotional difficulties, achieve well because of the good quality individual help readily available to them. Pupils in need of an extra boost, for example in literacy, benefit greatly from the attention they receive when withdrawn from lessons for group tuition by skilled teaching assistants. Those pupils identified as being gifted or talented thrive on the challenges provided for them and also achieve well.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils' enjoyment of learning and school life, and their good relationships, have a positive impact on their personal development and academic achievement. Pupils' passion for learning and enjoyment of the wide range of opportunities provided is reflected in their good attendance. The pupils are friendly, polite and helpful. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Within this, pupils show an outstanding appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions. Their spiritual development, while satisfactory, is much less well developed. Pupils say there is little or no bullying. Pupils demonstrate a keen awareness of the importance of safety around the school and beyond. They are experts on road safety. All pupils in Year 6 are first-aid trained. Pupils show an excellent awareness of healthy lifestyles. Their understanding of the value of exercise is reflected in their keen participation in the wide range of physical

activities, such as skipping. Many walk to school or ride bicycles in the daily 'cycle train'. Pupils make a good contribution to the school community through, for example, being members of the school council, house captains or playground leaders. Their good basic skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT mean they are well prepared for the next stage in their education and later life.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Pupils learn well through a range of interesting activities, often enhanced by the teachers' good use of interactive whiteboards to help illustrate points clearly. Staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and how they should behave. Generally, teachers match work closely to the needs of learners. For example, in numeracy lessons where more able pupils are grouped together, teachers ensure that pupils are given achievable challenges. These are often enjoyable practical activities. In other lessons, however, the range of tasks is not always so varied and pupils do not always have enough time to practise their skills. Teaching assistants provide effective support when working with individuals or small groups, but during the introductions to lessons by teachers their skills are sometimes not fully used because they are observers.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school is highly effective in helping pupils to develop an understanding of the wider world. The annual International Week, for example, celebrates pupils' different cultural traditions and is greatly appreciated by pupils and their parents. Overall, the curriculum is very carefully planned to meet the wide range of pupils' individual needs while at the same time providing equality of opportunity. However, some small groups of pupils have extra tuition at the same time each day. This means that they miss certain aspects of provision on a regular basis. Increasingly, the school is adopting a more creative approach to planning by teaching topics that link different subjects. This approach helps pupils to appreciate the relevance of their learning by applying skills learned in one subject when working in another. This initiative is in its infancy, but the school is aware of the need to unify its approach to tracking how well pupils acquire skills in all subjects.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school places a strong emphasis on ensuring pupils' safety and well-being. Much thought is given to risk assessments, and first-aid arrangements are good. Similarly, there is a good emphasis on the academic guidance for pupils, as they work towards individual targets in literacy, numeracy, ICT and science. Teachers offer praise and positive comments in pupils' books, indicating what they have done well, but teachers' marking does not always inform pupils how they can improve or make reference to their individual targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Effective teamwork and shared values are at the heart of the school's effectiveness in promoting a high degree of cohesion within the school community.

The senior management constantly focuses on improving pupils' attainment. Most recently, for example, the initiative to improve pupils' writing is proving to be successful. Leaders recognise that more work is to be done to raise standards further by eliminating the inconsistencies in the curriculum and in the academic guidance provided for pupils. Leaders at all levels successfully focus on improving the quality of provision, and have devised clear plans to guide their actions. Good strategic management enables the school to cope with annual changes in the numbers of pupils in each year group. The strategy of grouping pupils in to mixed-age classes, for example, gives the degree of flexibility required.

Governors work well in supporting the school. They have a clear understanding of the issues to be addressed, and are good at holding the school to account.

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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?	2
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?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
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

04 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Watchfield Primary School, Swindon, SN6 8SD

On behalf of the inspection team, I would like to thank you very much for being so helpful when we came to visit your school. We really enjoyed meeting you, talking to you and looking at your work. Your parents think that you go to a good school, and we agree. One of the things your parents like best is the way that children from countries all over the world get on together so well in your school. We think that this is something very special that you should be proud of.

Here is a list of some of the other things we like.

- You make good progress, and the standard of your work is often better than in many other schools.
- You learn well in lessons because the teaching you are given is good.
- You behave well and know a lot about how to keep yourselves healthy and safe.
- All of the adults in your school make sure that you are well looked after.
- Your headteacher and the other people who help run your school are doing a good job.

We particularly liked all of the exciting activities, like International Week, that your teachers arrange for you, and all of the 'extras' that help make learning fun.

Every school has something that could be improved, and this is what we have asked your school to concentrate on to help you to do even better.

- We would like your teachers to look closely at the skills that they want you to learn when they plan your work. This will help make your topics even more interesting and enjoyable. We would also like you to have more opportunities to use computers and other ICT equipment in your lessons every day. I'm sure that you would enjoy doing this!
- We also noticed that many of your teachers make very helpful comments when they mark your work, but their marking does not always help you to achieve your targets. So, we would like them to make sure that their marking is always linked to your targets. Then you should have a very clear idea about how well you are getting on.

With best wishes for your future success,

Mike Thompson

Lead Inspector