

The Winchcombe School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	135079
Local Authority	Berkshire
Inspection number	360687
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Ted Wheatley

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	275
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Averil Hewitt
Headteacher	Felix Rayner
Date of previous school inspection	30 June–1 July 2009
School address	Maple Crescent Newbury RG14 1 LN
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. Inspectors saw 20 lessons taught by 15 teachers. Meetings were held with staff, members of the governing body and pupils, and inspectors spoke to some parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at documentation about pupils' progress and policies, particularly those for safeguarding, as well as school development planning and evidence of self-evaluation. They considered 119 questionnaires returned by parents and carers.

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

- Does teaching meet the needs of the different groups of pupils, and promote increasing progress by all pupils?
- How effective are approaches to improve attainment in English, especially writing?
- How well do leaders identify areas of weakness and act quickly to deal with them?

Information about the school

The Winchcombe is a larger-than-average primary school and pupils come mainly from a White British heritage. The majority of pupils speak English as their first language. The other main languages spoken by pupils are Polish, Portuguese, Urdu and Punjabi. The proportion of pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has Healthy Schools status, Activemark and the International School awards. It runs a before- and after-school club each day. The speech and language unit based in the school was inspected at the same time. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage in the Nursery Year. A privately managed nursery on the same site as the school is inspected separately.

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

The Winchcombe is a good school that is improving. The quality of care, guidance and support is good and based on close relationships with families, and effective links with external agencies that promote successful support for pupils, parents and carers. Parents and carers are pleased with the school. One wrote, 'The school is great for my child's learning,' and another said, 'I am more than happy with my child's progress. It is a happy, friendly environment.' Parents and carers with children at the speech and language unit are also pleased. One said, 'The school provides the help and support my child needs. The headteacher is supportive and friendly, and governors are highly approachable.'

Pupils' attainment is broadly average, and rising. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher National Curriculum levels has risen, most noticeably in mathematics. Pupils practise basic numeracy skills regularly and, as a result, are competent with mental calculations. They have sound problem-solving skills and work with fractions and decimals proficiently. Literacy skills, while broadly average, show some unevenness. Spelling is sometimes inaccurate and pupils do not always use words correctly, which means that their writing is a little stilted and clumsy. This is further aggravated by some pupils not producing sufficient good-quality writing to consolidate what they have been taught. Nevertheless, pupils of all abilities generally make good progress, and despite occasional patchiness, the rate of pupils' progress is improving. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, in both the main school and the speech and language unit, make good progress.

Good and improving teaching is leading to the increasing rate of progress. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress is accurate and assessment information is mostly used well to provide work that is matched to pupils' learning needs. The pace of learning is generally good and teachers' expectations are usually high, especially for older pupils. However, this is not always the case and occasionally teachers do not check that all pupils produce the quality and quantity of work they are capable of or know what they are doing. This slows the pace of learning. Marking is regular and gives pupils a good idea of how well they are doing, but does not always indicate to pupils what the next steps in their learning are. Classroom support is good, especially for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In particular, encouraging these pupils to think about what they are doing and make decisions, rather than depending on adults to tell them answers, contributes well to their good learning. The curriculum is well planned and supported by a good range of visits and visitors to successfully motivate pupils to learn. There is

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a wide range of well-supported out-of-school activities.

Pupils enjoy school. This is seen in good levels of attendance for most pupils, and improving levels for the small minority who are persistently absent. Pupils behave well, and with good attention to their personal safety. They say they feel safe and that the school deals well with rare incidents of bullying. Pupils take on responsibilities readily and carry them out maturely. They have a good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet and regular exercise.

Leaders and managers are effective. The headteacher provides very clear direction for how the school should improve, and he is well supported by other leaders. Self-evaluation is accurate, and leaders know the areas they need to work on further, especially in embedding effective teaching methods, to continue driving up attainment and progress. The governing body is well informed, fully involved in development planning, and focused on improving attainment and progress. Given the improvements made in attainment and progress, the capacity to sustain further improvement is good.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise attainment in literacy by ensuring pupils consistently:
 - spell accurately
 - use vocabulary correctly
 - produce sufficient work of quality to consolidate the writing skills they have been taught.
- Improve teaching by ensuring that:
 - pupils produce work of consistently high quality to reflect their ability
 - teachers monitor pupils during lessons to make sure they know what they are supposed to be doing
 - assessment information is used consistently to make sure pupils know what the next steps in learning are.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children start school in the Nursery Year with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. They make good progress and achieve well by the time they leave school. By Year 6, pupils speak and write with a wide range of vocabulary and sentence structures. For example, in a lesson on using past tense verbs, the teacher modelled clearly the use of irregular past tense verbs in a sentence. Pupils then produced their own sentences, showing they understood and could use their knowledge in some detail to describe past activities in their speech. However, across the school, pupils do not always produce enough written work of suitable quality to demonstrate that they have mastered particular vocabulary or literacy skills well enough, and that they can spell accurately. Pupils' numeracy skills are improving. They calculate and explain how they carry out mental and written calculations competently and confidently. Their skills are consolidated effectively by applying

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mathematical skills to everyday activities, such as costing out resources for new classrooms. Over time, pupils’ progress is steadily improving. Good progress is spreading through the school and is evident in most lessons. For example, in a numeracy lesson in which problems were presented in a written format, pupils worked well with each other to extract the mathematical information and to work out what calculations they needed to do. The great majority of pupils did this well and could explain the types of calculation needed and the steps they had to follow. The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving as they become increasingly confident and competent. The small numbers of pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because they receive effective support that rapidly enables them to gain the literacy and numeracy skills they need to work well with other pupils. Pupils in the speech and language unit make good and sometimes excellent progress as a result of the intensive support they receive.

Pupils take pleasure in learning and in the wide range of other things they do. They take on a wide range of responsibilities and carry them out well. For example, older pupils help with problems in the playground, the school council organises money-raising activities for charities, other pupils help teachers at lunchtimes and organise music for assemblies. Some pupils have also been invited to express their views about the school building project. The great majority of pupils take part in physical activities, reflecting the school’s Healthy Schools award and its Activemark. Pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, with pupils quickly gaining an understanding of the cultures and traditions of different people living in Britain today. Given that pupils have broadly average literacy and numeracy skills, preparation for their future economic well-being is satisfactory.

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	3
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	2
Pupils’ behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils’ attendance ¹	3

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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The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

2

How effective is the provision?

Lessons are usually interesting and hold pupils’ attention and enthusiasm. Teachers organise a wide range of challenging learning activities based on a good understanding of how well pupils learn. In most lessons, there are opportunities for pupils to learn independently, and this generally works well. Teachers usually focus their support on one group in the class but keep a close check on how other groups of pupils make progress. For example, in a lesson on counting using the contents of a witch’s potion as the theme, the teacher set work for all groups, and while working with one group, made sure that she and the classroom assistant frequently checked how well other pupils were making progress. This worked well and all pupils made good progress. However, this effective strategy is not used consistently, with the result that pupils do not work productively enough on occasions and sometimes do not fully understand what they are supposed to do. Marking is regular and gives a clear picture of how well pupils are doing and the levels they are working at, but sometimes opportunities are missed to tell pupils what they need to do next. These inconsistencies are being tackled firmly but are not yet fully embedded. Relationships are good. Pupils are confident to ask questions and make contributions to discussions.

The curriculum provides some imaginative experiences for pupils that engage them in effective learning and encourage good attitudes and behaviour. For example, the crime scene investigation project based around the theft of a tractor and supported by the police provided many opportunities for pupils to work independently, to study farm life, evaluate evidence and practise basic literacy, numeracy and computer skills. Several booster classes support pupils’ learning effectively and pupils participate in a wide range of sports clubs, art and music activities. Visits to other towns are helping to promote a greater awareness of other cultures, traditions and backgrounds of people in Britain.

The support for pupils whose challenging circumstances make them vulnerable is good, and well maintained by effective relationships with families. Procedures to ensure pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress are well supported by a wide range of services provided by the local authority and other agencies. Strategies to improve attendance are effective, and steadily leading to a reduction in the small number of persistent absentees. However, long-term illness by a few pupils continues to lower the attendance figures overall. Transfer arrangements are good, with a wide programme of visits to high schools, links with the early years classes and the involvement of parents and carers. Provision in the speech and language unit is good, with pupils receiving effective teaching to address specific learning difficulties for part of the day, and then spending time learning with other pupils during the rest of the day. Pupils attending the before- and after-school provision are well cared for and productively occupied in several practical activities and games which they enjoy.

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
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 headteacher works closely with other leaders to drive improvements. He has successfully raised the morale of staff after a difficult period of underachievement and established a shared vision for raising levels of attainment. The headteacher holds everyone accountable for their role in driving improvement. Staff are well supported with appropriate professional development, especially in ensuring more challenging teaching in a small number of classes. Much has been done to improve teaching, although some of the improvements are not yet fully embedded. Nevertheless, there have been impressive improvements in attainment and progress, especially in mathematics, and plans for improvements in English are well founded.

The governing body holds the school to account well, and sets challenging targets for the school to meet, which with minor and reducing patchiness it does. The school’s engagement with parents and carers is good and improving. The school has found that informal approaches are most successful in involving parents and carers, and has developed these through, for example, coffee mornings, classroom competitions, praise assemblies, problem-solving activities and shared learning logs. As a result, attendance at parental consultations is high, and parents and carers are keen to learn further how to support pupils’ learning. Partnerships to promote pupils’ learning and well-being are good, with close links with other schools for professional development, and to which The Winchcombe staff make valued contributions. The school promotes community cohesion well, especially at the local level through links with other primary schools, secondary schools, the local church and police, and at the international level for which it has an International School award.

Safeguarding requirements are met, and the school ensures that pupils are safe and secure. However, at the time of the inspection, a small number of administrative issues were incomplete, which the school is urgently addressing. The promotion of equal opportunities is good, taking into account improving progress and attainment. Procedures to eliminate all forms of discrimination are effective.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and	2
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driving improvement Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
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
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	3
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

Children make good progress, especially in their personal and social skills, literacy and numeracy. Overall, most achieve the levels expected in all areas of learning by the time they enter Year 1. However, a small number of children start Year 1 with lower than expected skills in writing and speaking. Children enjoy school and have positive attitudes to everything they do. They behave well and initiate their own learning readily. For example, in a building activity, children hammered nails, channelled water and sand, and both boys and girls were fully absorbed in the activity. They shared and played together well.

Teachers and other adults assess children’s learning accurately and provide activities to meet their specific learning needs. The curriculum is wide. It is based on children’s daily experiences, such as the current school building work, and effectively promotes children’s knowledge of the world around them. Relationships between adults and children are good, children are encouraged to ask questions and follow their own ideas. Resources are good and organised well. Opportunities for children to develop literacy and numeracy skills are integrated into many of the inside and outside activities, and adults steer children towards these regularly. The quality of care is good and children are happy to talk to adults and to ask for help when they need it. Links with homes and the private pre-school, and with Year 1 staff, are good and as a result, children settle in quickly and transfer smoothly to the main school at the end of Reception. Leadership is effective and has a particular focus on developing work to promote children’s literacy skills further.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	2

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Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Just under half of parents and carers, which is a higher proportion than average, returned the questionnaire and almost all responses were positive and supportive of the school. A very small proportion of parents and carers commented that they did not consider that the school deals with unacceptable behaviour well enough. However, inspectors saw only good and sometimes excellent behaviour. School records and discussions with pupils show that there are few incidents of poor behaviour and these are dealt with swiftly.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at The Winchcombe 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 119 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 275 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	80	67	39	33	0	0	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	61	44	37	3	3	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	57	48	57	48	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	59	50	57	48	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	72	61	44	37	1	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	68	57	48	40	3	3	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	62	52	50	42	3	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)	54	45	58	49	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child’s particular needs	64	54	51	43	1	1	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	59	50	51	43	2	2	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	55	46	57	48	1	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	77	65	40	34	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	84	71	31	26	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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 08 April 2011 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.

3 October 2011

Dear Pupils



Inspection of The Winchcombe School, Newbury RG14 1LN

Thank you for making us so welcome when we visited your school. We judged your school to be good and improving. You make good progress, which is also improving. The following things are particular strengths of the school.

- Teaching is good and lessons are interesting. There are plenty of trips and activities to make learning enjoyable.
- The headteacher, staff and governing body make sure that the school continues to improve.
- You feel safe, and know that if you are worried about anything, it will be dealt with quickly.
- You behave well, treat other pupils and adults considerately, and those of you who have responsibilities carry them out well.
- You know about the importance of being healthy, and you eat sensibly and take part in physical activities.
- The school takes good care of you and makes sure you are safe.

To help the school become even better, we have asked teachers to make sure that:

- you spell accurately, use words correctly in writing and speech, and practise your writing more often to ensure that you learn properly what you have been taught
- the work they plan for you is always challenging, they check to make sure you know what you are supposed to do, and always tell you what the next steps in your learning are.

All of you can help by making sure your spelling is accurate, you use words correctly in speech and writing, and you do enough written work to make sure you thoroughly learn what you have been taught.

Yours sincerely

Ted Wheatley
Lead inspector

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