

Woodlands Primary School

Hollybank Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside CH41 2SY

Inspection dates

1–2 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The school is at the heart of the local community. Different groups of pupils mix together very well.
- Everything the school does is part of a determined effort to improve the lives of pupils and their families.
- The headteacher leads the school with insight, skill and passion. Staff and governors are absolutely dedicated to achieving the ambitious vision she has set out. The school is improving rapidly.
- Leaders give well-considered support to develop and improve staff's work with pupils. The quality of teaching over time is good and improving.
- While the work of middle leaders is having less impact at present, the school already has firm plans in place to enable further improvements.
- Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They are polite, thoughtful and very considerate towards others. They are keen to learn and they work hard. Pupils are proud of their school and actively help staff to make Woodlands even better.
- Pupils are extremely well cared for and protected because staff and leaders act quickly about any concerns and they make sure that families are given the support they need.
- The school has an emphasis upon high-quality learning for pupils. On occasion, pupils' work does not challenge them enough.
- Pupils are making good and sometimes excellent progress across subjects from their different starting points.
- Pupils' attainment is rising quickly and differences between groups of pupils are diminishing. Nevertheless, leaders, staff and governors are taking clear and determined steps to make sure that all pupils attain highly.
- Pupils experience a broad and fascinating range of learning at school. Staff and leaders make good use of their detailed knowledge of pupils and different subjects to help pupils develop new skills and knowledge.
- Children in the early years are given a valuable start to their education due to the skill of the staff team and its successful links with parents.
- Governors have a clear understanding of the school and take their responsibilities seriously. They are unafraid to challenge the school about improvement. They give the headteacher a good level of support.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise pupils' attainment across subjects by:
 - ensuring that pupils' work is challenging
 - enabling middle leaders to have a greater impact on provision and practice in their areas of responsibility.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Upon taking up post two years ago, the new headteacher established a clear understanding of the needs of the school and a carefully considered vision of what can be achieved. Staff and governors are dedicated to the shared vision of helping pupils achieve highly. Woodlands is a rapidly improving school and one that is at the centre of the local community. The school is considered 'light touch' for support from the local authority.
- The headteacher has succeeded in creating a school which is attractive, calm and tidy. Learning and achievement are visibly and positively celebrated. Every physical space is used to maximum effect and standards of behaviour by pupils and staff are high.
- All staff are valued and this means that teachers, teaching assistants and lunchtime staff all feel supported and engaged in the improvement of the school. Typical staff comments include, 'We welcome the challenge the headteacher gives us,' and, 'Our training makes a real difference to our work'.
- Given the high expectations for adult behaviour set by the headteacher, it is no surprise that staff relationships are very positive and mutually supportive. Newly and recently qualified teachers joining the school feel very well supported and excited about their developing careers.
- Provision for special educational needs is led well by the coordinator. She is knowledgeable and passionate about her role. Her work is improving outcomes for these pupils because she makes thorough checks of pupils' progress and supports her colleagues well. While other middle leaders are beginning to develop their roles, they are having less impact upon the attainment and progress for pupils. Nonetheless, clear steps are being taken to strengthen this aspect of school leadership.
- The school curriculum at Woodlands is designed carefully to broaden pupils' experiences and help them to understand the wider area beyond their locality. This means that pupils are developing a good understanding of the Wirral, including the beaches, lighthouses, libraries and art galleries. School surveys of pupils indicate that these experiences are immensely popular.
- Care has been taken to make sure that there is full coverage of the requirements of the national curriculum and this is reviewed carefully and regularly by leaders. As well as all staff being able to contribute to the design and content of the curriculum, pupils' views are valued. Hence a very popular topic of 'I can make a difference' was kept because of pupils' requests.
- A broad range of extra-curricular activities is provided for pupils and great thought has been given to timings to make sure that pupils who also attend mosque after school do not miss out on key opportunities. Drama, homework, girls' football, yoga and choir are just some of the choices. The very popular breakfast club also provides pupils with enjoyable opportunities to develop a range of skills including their coordination, communication, building and imaginative skills.

- Because school leaders are so focused upon the whole-school improvement priorities, additional government funding such as the pupil premium, primary physical education and sport funding and money for special educational needs is used well to broaden the curriculum and improve the quality of teaching. The planned impact is clearly identified and reviewed systematically across the year to improve ongoing decisions.

Governance of the school

- The governing body maintains a careful overview of the work of the school. It hears from the headteacher and other leaders regularly about development and improvement. Governors take their responsibilities very seriously. They make sure that the information presented to them is in plain English and then challenged and debated fully. Governors are fully behind the vision of the headteacher to improve the lives of local families. They keep themselves up to date through training, networking and accessing national information about improving governance. They use their wide-ranging skills to good effect to keep the work of the school under close review.
- In order to further understand at a strategic level the progress of pupils, governors are now receiving regular updates about 'case-study pupils' to illustrate how pupils are making good or better progress. This is helping governors to be more challenging in their questions to leaders.
- Governors keep school finances under careful review and plan ahead with a clear understanding of key strategic challenges facing the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The school does much above and beyond minimum requirements to make sure that pupils and their families are safe and protected.
- There is a strong culture of vigilance, open relationships between all staff, good training and strong community links to underpin the work of the school. There is a genuine emphasis upon listening to the child's voice in decisions made about them.
- Safeguarding is led well by the headteacher and leadership team and given additional strength through the extensive and excellent work of the school learning mentor. Staff have good knowledge of child protection and broader aspects of safeguarding. Pupils and their families are given every possible support by staff at Woodlands as well as help to access other specialist services whenever required. Case recording about pupils is excellent. Staff and leaders have a clear understanding of the vulnerabilities of individual children within the local area and use this information very well when making decisions to safeguard pupils.
- Staff have a very clear knowledge of the signs of abuse and how to refer concerns about pupils and adults. They have a good knowledge of issues such as the 'Prevent' duty, female genital mutilation (FGM) and neglect. They make sure that pupils and families receive very clear and regular advice about keeping safe when online. Because messages for pupils about safeguarding are so clearly displayed around the school, pupils have a clear knowledge of whom they can speak to from the school safeguarding team.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- When the new headteacher joined the school two years ago, she identified a range of weaknesses in teaching, some inaccuracies in the assessment of pupils and variations in the quality of pupils' work. Through extensive staff training and frequent support and monitoring for the work of teachers and teaching assistants, these key issues have been tackled quickly and successfully.
- The quality of teaching over time in the school is now consistently good and pupils are making much more progress than in the past. Following a whole-school focus upon improvement, the quality of mathematics teaching is now good and the most able pupils are given work that challenges and interests them. For example, a group of these pupils in Year 6 thoroughly enjoyed an opportunity to identify questions that would assist in the construction of a wild, outdoor area at the school. They were being challenged to think about mathematical concepts of time and cost in real, meaningful situations. The teacher skilfully reminded pupils of the need to consider estimation and also checking their suggestions by considering the opposite or working backwards. This deepened their thinking and prompted much valuable learning.
- A strength of teaching across the school includes teachers and teaching assistants using precise questions to extend pupils' learning. Staff also make quick adaptations to teaching when pupils learn more rapidly than expected. This reflects the increased skills of staff due to training from leaders as well as the careful planning of which questions may stretch pupils' abilities. Teamwork between different staff is strong and a high proportion of staff commented very positively to inspectors about this aspect of their work.
- Staff and leaders have a detailed knowledge of pupils' lives and respect where pupils start in their skills and abilities. Assessments of pupils throughout the school are accurate and detailed, and make good use of insights from parents, teachers and teaching assistants. Staff often make good use of this information to match teaching to pupils' needs and to give pupils the individual practical and emotional support they need to engage well in their learning.
- The standard of pupils' work across subjects is good. Leaders have focused successfully upon making sure that staff hold high expectations of what pupils can achieve. The school's policy about feedback is applied consistently. For example, in science, pupils receive precise, science-specific feedback as well as more general feedback about how to improve their work.
- Because great thought and consideration are given by staff and leaders to the quality of the environment in classrooms and corridors, the school is a very attractive and enjoyable place to learn. High-quality displays on classroom walls celebrate learning across subjects. This extends into the school hall, for example, where some current displays positively celebrate recent improvements in the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils' work shows that staff are now making extensive use of opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across subjects.

- Teaching is increasingly meeting the needs of the most able pupils. Staff and leaders are checking and reviewing these pupils' learning closely. Information is being used well to make sure most-able pupils think more deeply about what they are learning. Recent improvements in how the school groups pupils for teaching are helping the most able pupils to explore their learning in greater depth and therefore make more rapid progress.
- In some classes, there is a lack of challenge which means that pupils do not attain high standards.
- The headteacher works well with staff to make sure that every opportunity is used to enhance pupils' learning. For example, each class is named after a famous person. Thus pupils in Years 3 and 4 have a good knowledge of whichever famous scientist their class is named after, such as Rosalind Franklin.
- The school also uses as many ways as possible to make sure that pupils arrive at classrooms ready for their lessons. In key stage 1, a typical lunchtime break ends with pupils playing circle games with staff. This means that they arrive in classrooms calm and ready for their lessons.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Across school, in activities from breakfast club to singing practice, pupils demonstrate high levels of self-confidence. They keenly put themselves forward for additional responsibility such as roles on the school council because they feel that they have much to contribute to their school. Different groups of pupils respect one another and mix together very well.
- This school lives according to its values of respect, responsibility and resilience. This gives pupils many opportunities to learn about the different families and communities in their school and locality. They learn the importance of making a contribution to developing and improving their school. Because of the thoughtful way they are treated by all staff, pupils have an excellent understanding of democracy: they know that their views matter and will be fully considered in the school's key decisions that affect them. Pupils are gaining a first-rate preparation for their life in modern Britain.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe online because there is extensive promotion of safe online behaviour through lessons and school events and excellent information provided for parents.
- Pupils have a very clear understanding of what might represent bullying and they know to watch out for one another. Those pupils who act as 'anti-bullying ambassadors' are highly visible in classrooms and in the playground due to their red fleeces and caps. These pupils have a well-developed knowledge of how to tackle bullying. Other pupils say that they feel safe knowing that such peer support is available should they ever need it, which they say is rare.

- Pupils have a very clear understanding of healthy eating and the importance of being active. Pupils have worked on suggestions for equipment for the outside gym – now being used every day at breaktime. Pupils acting as ‘junior healthy school advisers’ aim to make their school as healthy as possible. They reward pupils for choosing healthy options at lunchtime on ‘choc-away-Tuesday’, ‘no crisp Wednesday’ and ‘fruity Friday’. Pupils know which food choices are wise.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Throughout the school, pupils’ conduct is exemplary. Staff and leaders have high expectations and pupils respond with absolute dedication and enthusiasm. They love their school and they want to help others to enjoy it too. They open doors for one another and adults, they frequently say please and thank you and they are politely inquisitive about visitors such as inspectors.
- Pupils are accustomed to visits to their classrooms from visitors and school leaders and they show consistently excellent behaviour regardless of who is watching. They rarely need staff help to think how to behave and they have an excellent understanding of how to assist others with making thoughtful choices regarding their behaviour. There are no disruptions to lessons, and across classes and corridor spaces there is a shared buzz of excitement about learning.
- Pupils show great self-discipline and they treat the school premises with much respect. They are very happy to take roles to tidy up after one another. These behaviours help maintain the high-quality spaces and positive atmosphere in the school that leaders and staff have developed.
- Pupils arrive promptly at school each morning, bursting with enthusiasm for learning. Improved arrangements for how and when pupils arrive at school are making sure that their overall punctuality is good and improving quickly. Pupils’ attendance at school has risen in the past two years and is now close to the national average.
- The number of pupils who have a large proportion of absences from school has reduced dramatically because leaders and staff work closely and effectively with families and the local authority to support pupils. There are some notable examples where the school has not given up on pupils. Over time, this has meant that those pupils are given every possible chance of a good education. Nevertheless, leaders are ambitious and not complacent and so clear plans are in place to raise attendance even further.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- From low starting points, many pupils make consistently strong progress in their learning across the school. Leaders and staff have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and frequently challenge themselves about improvement. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, standards are rising quickly across the school and the quality of pupils’ work is good. Many pupils currently in Years 5 and 6 are now making outstanding progress in their reading, writing and mathematics.

- Pupils are greatly enthused about learning because they experience high expectations and strong support from all leaders and staff. Older pupils feel confident about moving on to secondary school. They talk with enthusiasm about their hopes of attending university in the future. Across the school, pupils have strong self-belief in their own abilities, as well as what more they can still learn. They have clear ideas as to their possible employment in the future.
- Detailed review and planning by leaders and staff have led to much careful consideration of how best to help different pupils make up the ground they need to cover in their learning. Hence, pupil premium funding is being directed well towards increasing the time that small groups of disadvantaged pupils have extra help from teaching staff. This is helping pupils to experience a broader range of learning opportunities. As a result, disadvantaged pupils are increasingly doing well at school and the difference between them and others nationally is beginning to diminish quickly.
- At Woodlands, pupils' progress and their attainment in the new national assessments in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016 are broadly average. This information cannot be compared with that for previous years as the assessments are different and expectations of pupils have been raised. Published information for pupils in 2016 suggests that middle-ability pupils at Woodlands did not fare as well as other groups of pupils. However, detailed school tracking and analysis by school leaders indicate that this issue was specific to that year group of pupils and not a wider issue across the school. Inspectors' evidence confirms this conclusion.
- The progress made by low-ability pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, was strong in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016. This is because the school is placing such a close focus upon improving the abilities of pupils who need to catch up with others. Close attention is given to extra catch-up groups and support for named pupils. These ways of working are checked and reviewed very carefully by leaders.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve well and they are making good progress across subjects. Some of these pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Skilful support from teachers and teaching assistants, as well as excellent links between the school, families and the wider community, impact well on these pupils' learning.
- Over time, the most able pupils are increasingly being challenged and stretched in their learning. Work in pupils' books across subjects shows that the most able pupils are given high levels of independence and extended, challenging pieces of work to complete.
- Pupils are achieving more and more successfully in science across the school because of good teaching. For example, pupils are increasingly able to explain complex scientific concepts and their experiments, both practically and in writing.

- The most able and least able readers in the school are increasingly succeeding in their reading skills. For example, boys and disadvantaged pupils are attaining more highly in the Year 1 phonics assessment than in the past at the school. Pupils told inspectors that they enjoy reading high-quality books that they can take home. Their understanding of using and applying their phonic skills is good. They are enthusiastic about literature because of the attention given by staff to reading and using stories to teach a range of subjects. For example, the story of 'Traction Man' was used in Year 2 very successfully to enthuse pupils about the story and to stimulate some learning in science.
- Pupils' overall attainment in the school is low but rising quickly because of concerted action by staff, leaders and governors. Together they are very clear that this focus remains their biggest priority. The school is taking clear and focused actions each half term to build on recent successes and improvements.

Early years provision

Good

- Due to the skilful leadership of the headteacher and the early years leader, the wider successes of the school apply equally to the provision for the youngest children. The classrooms are attractive, well-planned places to learn. Children's achievements are celebrated thoughtfully in displays. Resources are high quality and every use is made of the available space to provide interesting learning opportunities.
- There is accurate, perceptive self-review of what is going well in the early years and where improvement can be made. The quality of teaching over time is consistently good and staff training impacts well upon provision and outcomes for children. Teaching, as in key stages 1 and 2, is grounded in strong teamwork between staff and high expectations of what children can achieve. Staff give children skilled, sensitive support and make talk and play a central focus of children's experiences.
- There is good engagement with parents. This assists staff to have an informed understanding of children's needs and abilities from which to plan their learning. High-quality relationships also mean that parents begin to link closely with school right from the beginning. Staff link fully with other workers whenever children need extra help and support, such as with their speech, language and communication skills.
- The recording, tracking and analysis of children's needs and abilities are well considered and used skilfully by staff to plan learning. Staff know children in detail and check their progress regularly to spot and respond to any gaps that may be emerging.
- While children's starting points are much lower than is typical for their age (and getting lower with each year group that starts in Nursery), their progress by the end of Reception is very positive. As a result, the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development is rising year on year, and while below the national average, the difference is diminishing steadily. Outcomes in mathematics, reading and writing are improving each year. Crucially, children are increasingly developing the emotional and social skills they need to unlock wider aspects of their learning and be ready for Year 1.

- Girls, and children who have special educational needs, achieve particularly well compared with boys and disadvantaged children. Leaders have spotted this variation and are taking well-planned steps to further improve children's attainment and progress. Thus, extra government funding is spent well to make sure that there is a high number of staff to children so that children get the help they need.

School details

Unique reference number	104990
Local authority	Wirral
Inspection number	10003109

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	339
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Val Maher
Headteacher	Jacquie Fleetwood
Telephone number	0151 6478406
Website	www.woodlandswirral.co.uk
Email address	schooloffice@woodlands.wirral.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	6–7 October 2011

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The headteacher and some teachers are new to the school since the previous inspection. The two assistant headteachers have taken up their roles since the previous inspection.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the government's pupil premium funding is well above average.
- The majority of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is above average.

- Approximately one third of pupils speak English as an additional language, most of whom speak Bengali as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. A large proportion of these pupils have moderate learning difficulties and/or speech, language and communication difficulties.
- The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors spoke to some parents as they brought their children to school on both days of the inspection. Inspectors reviewed 10 comments made by parents in response to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View.
- The inspectors observed learning in classes, the school hall and outdoors. Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) made observations jointly with the headteacher.
- The inspectors looked at a range of pupils' work and talked to pupils about their learning. Inspectors heard some children read. HMI looked at a range of pupils' work with the headteacher.
- The inspectors spoke to a wide range of pupils in classrooms, the breakfast club and around the school. HMI also spoke to pupils nominated as 'anti-bullying ambassadors' and to pupils from the school council.
- HMI met with three members of the governing body, including the chair, and spoke to a representative of Wirral local authority.
- Inspectors met with a range of staff throughout the inspection. HMI also spoke to 19 teaching assistants in a separate meeting to gather their views of the school.
- The inspectors considered a range of school documents, including reviews of how well the school is doing, plans for the future, information about the progress of current pupils and documents about the care and protection of pupils.

Inspection team

Tim Vaughan, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Clarke	Ofsted Inspector
Tina Cleugh	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Parker	Ofsted Inspector

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