

Woodhead Primary School Hamilton South Lanarkshire Council

7 October 2008

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1. Background

Woodhead Primary School was inspected in May 2008 as part of a national sample of primary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the work of the school at all stages. It evaluated pupils' achievements, the effectiveness of the school, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self evaluation and innovation, and its capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on attainment in English language and mathematics.

HM Inspectors examined pupils' work and interviewed groups of pupils, including the pupil council, and staff. Members of the inspection team also met the chairperson of the Parent Council, representatives of the parent teacher association (PTA) and a group of parents¹.

The school serves the Woodhead area to the south of Hamilton. It forms part of the Calderside Learning Community. At the time of the inspection the roll was 309. The proportion of pupils who were entitled to free school meals was in line with the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. At the time of the inspection the acting headteacher had been in post eight months covering the current headteachers' secondment to Learning and Teaching Scotland.

2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- The quality of pastoral care provided for all pupils.
- Polite, well-mannered and very well-behaved children.
- The effective leadership of the acting headteacher.
- The quality of teamwork among staff and their support to the acting headteacher.

3. What are the views of parents, pupils and staff?

Parents were positive about almost all aspects of the work of the school. They thought that staff made them feel welcome and that the school had a good reputation in the community. A significant number felt that the school building was not kept in good order and that they would like a clearer idea of the schools' priorities for improvement. Almost all pupils enjoyed being at the school. They thought teachers expected them to work hard, explained things clearly and were good at letting them know how to improve their work. Staff thought that the school was well led and that they celebrated pupils' success regularly. A significant number of support staff felt that their training time could be used more effectively and would like to be more involved in decision making.

4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?

Learners' experiences

The school provided pupils with a broad and well-balanced curriculum. The additional time allocated to English and mathematics at all stages had been used successfully in improving pupils' attainment. Pupils at all stages benefited from the wide range of educational excursions, the input of visitors and from taking part in enterprise activities. Good programmes were in place to support pupils' personal and social development (PSD). Across the school, pupils had a secure knowledge of healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. They benefited from the high quality experiences delivered by specialist staff in art and design, music, religious and moral education and problem-solving and enquiry. Staff were beginning to increase the focus on developing pupils' language skills across the curriculum. The school needed to review arrangements to ensure that all pupils had sufficient access to high quality physical education. Pupils had insufficient opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) to support their learning. The quality of teaching across the school was inconsistent, but good overall. In a few lessons it was very good. Most teachers shared the intentions of lessons with pupils to good effect and used a range of appropriate teaching approaches. They made good use of questioning to check pupils' understanding. They did not always use the information gathered from questioning to help inform pupils' next steps in learning. In a few classes, teachers did not provide sufficiently well-balanced learning activities in writing to allow pupils to build on their prior achievements. Homework varied in quality across the school.

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Almost all pupils were enthusiastic and hardworking. Across the school, they were increasingly taking a more active interest in their own learning. In most classes pupils were highly motivated by the use of interactive boards to explore number and discuss answers with their partners. Pupils in P4/P5 were developing good skills in collaborating with each other in tasks that asked them to identify discrimination by race and gender. In P7, pupils worked well independently, asking each other questions to discover the need for formulae in algebra. In science in P2/P3 and in P4, pupils were given the opportunity to learn through discovery. Pupils at P1 and P2 were beginning to develop their learning in language and mathematics through a range of stimulating play activities. This good practice required to be developed further. Pupils were at an early stage in learning to reflect on their own progress and identify how they might improve.

Improvements in performance

The school had successfully improved its performance in a number of important areas. Overall, this amounted to a good improvement in performance across the school.

The overall quality of attainment in English language was good. The school had maintained a high level of attainment over the last two years and most pupils achieved appropriate national levels in reading and writing. Across the school a few pupils achieved these levels earlier than would normally be expected. Most pupils at the early stages were making slow progress in both reading and writing. The school did not yet assess pupils' attainment in listening and talking. Pupils who were experiencing difficulty in their classwork were receiving appropriate support and were making good progress. Across all stages, pupils listened attentively to their teachers' instructions and responded well in class. They listened carefully to each other in discussions and, in the best lessons, expressed their views confidently. At P1 and P2, pupils were hesitant and lacked confidence when reading aloud from a familiar text. Most pupils at the middle and upper stages enjoyed reading. They could describe a range of books they had read for pleasure and enjoyed the new books available to them through class and school libraries. They could use books to access and extract information. From P1 to P3, most pupils had limited opportunities to write at length or for a variety of purposes. Pupils from P4 to P7 were making progress in developing the quality and quantity of their writing. Across the school, standards of handwriting and presentation were good.

The overall quality of pupils' attainment in mathematics was very good. Levels of attainment had remained consistently high in recent years. Most pupils achieved appropriate national levels and a few achieved these levels earlier than might normally be expected. Pupils who were experiencing difficulty in their classwork were receiving appropriate support and were making good progress. At all stages, pupils could draw graphs and interpret information effectively and were sufficiently confident in using ICT for information handling. Almost all pupils were confident in their understanding of money,

time and measurement. At all stages, pupils completed simple written calculations accurately and were secure in mental calculations. Most pupils across the school were secure in the use of fractions and decimals. Pupils' skills in practical mathematics varied across the school. At all stages, they had a sound understanding of two- and three-dimensional shapes and of symmetry. By P7, most pupils were able to discuss and use a range of strategies that could be used to solve problems.

Across the school, pupils' were developing their knowledge and skills in history, geography and science. Pupils at P3 had recently studied the Egyptians and had produced interesting Egyptian-style art work. Those at P4/P5 had recently been studying the planets and had made their own rhyme to remember the order of the planets. Pupils demonstrated a high level of skill in art and design. A range of paintings, collage and drawings were well displayed across the school. Pupils had worked recently with a local artist to create two impressive murals in the playground. In a number of classes pupils showed that their thinking skills in science were well developed.

The school actively promoted pupils' wider achievements. Pupils were developing effective enterprise skills through organising activities such as raising awareness of world issues and their Summer Fair. In P7, pupils were developing their financial management skills through establishing and running the school stationary shop. Those at the upper stages had some opportunities to exercise responsibility, including acting as monitors and buddies for younger pupils. They responded well to opportunities to be involved in decision making through involvement in the pupil council and health promotion committee. The school had achieved a bronze award as a health promoting school. Pupils participated enthusiastically in a good range of after-school activities, including netball, football and athletics and were improving their physical skills as a result. At P7, pupils developed their personal and social skills through participation in a residential experience. Across the school, pupils lacked an understanding of environmental issues.

The school had made some progress in overtaking the priorities in its improvement plan. Several of these had had measurable impact on pupils' experiences. For example, pupils were now provided with improved resources for reading and standards in reading and writing had been maintained. Pupils' knowledge of equality issues was good and they had responded well to the school's emphasis on promoting positive behaviour. A few priorities had not been fully developed due to staff absence. The school was at an early stage in improving the provision for pupils with additional support needs.

5. How well are pupils' learning needs met?

The school's arrangements for meeting pupils' learning needs were satisfactory. Staff used an appropriate range of strategies to identify pupils' individual learning needs and to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. A range of staff made positive contributions to helping pupils to learn. There was scope to increase the amount of support pupils received through more effective deployment of staff. For a few pupils, learning activities were not well matched to their needs and were not sufficiently challenging. In a few classes the pace of learning was too slow. Pupils' experiences in English language was too dependent on the use of commercially-produced resources. Several pupils were supported in their learning by individualised educational programmes (IEPs). The school had correctly identified the need to involve pupils and parents more fully in planning and reviewing IEPs. The school worked well with a range of partner agencies to support pupils' needs. The deputy headteacher had recently taken steps to ensure that support for learning across the school was monitored and reviewed regularly. Nonetheless, arrangements for pupil support still needed to be coordinated more effectively to improve pupils' learning opportunities.

6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Care, welfare and development	The school's arrangements for pupils' care and welfare were very good. Staff promoted a strong culture of care across the school to help ensure pupils' emotional, social and physical well-being. All staff were caring and committed to pupils' best interests. They knew pupils and their families well. They followed established procedures based on authority policies relating to pupil safety, including anti-bullying, internet safety and child protection. The school's approaches to record keeping of confidential information and early morning attendance checks were very good. Effective links with a range of agencies enabled staff to deal sensitively with pupils' needs. Pupils said that they felt safe and well cared for in the school. They believed that the school listened to their views. At all stages, pupils were knowledgeable about the importance of healthy lifestyles. Transition arrangements between nursery and the school and for P7 pupils transferring to Calderside Academy were well planned and effective.

Management and use of resources and space for learning	Staff had improved the appearance of the school and used attractive displays to create a stimulating learning environment for pupils. Teachers made good use of the available teaching areas. There was appropriately secure access to the building. Access for users with restricted mobility was good. There were important weaknesses in the quality of the accommodation and facilities. Storage space was limited and as a result equipment intruded into the space for learning. Teaching bases were often overcrowded and this limited the space for pupils to be active or independent in their learning. Pupil toilets were in need of upgrading.
Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality and fairness	Staff, parents and pupils identified strongly with the school. Pupils were proud of their school. At all stages, their achievements were shared and celebrated at assemblies and through colourful displays and newsletters. Pupils felt that they were valued and took seriously their roles in helping others. They were helpful and friendly and showed respect for others. Staff expectations of pupils' attendance and achievements were high, but their expectations of all pupils' attainment were not always high enough. The school successfully used a range of approaches to promote diversity and tolerant attitudes. Regular assemblies provided effective opportunities for religious observance and for celebrating diversity. Staff promoted an awareness of ethnic and cultural diversity through the programmes for religious and moral education and PSD. As a result, pupils could discuss issues of prejudice and discrimination.
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	The school's links with parents and the wider community were good. The Parent Council was supportive of the school. The acting headteacher communicated with parents through helpful school and class newsletters, which included details of pupils' achievements. Parents attended school events, assisted in classroom activities and some participated in the school's health promotion committee and travel plan group. The school consulted parents appropriately on sensitive aspects of health education. Staff recognised the need to develop further the involvement of all parents in supporting pupils' learning.

7. Leading and improving the school

Appendix 1 provides HM Inspectors' overall evaluation of the work of the school.

Woodhead Primary School provided its pupils with a caring and supportive environment. Staff, pupils and parents identified strongly with the school. The overall quality of learning and teaching were good and the school had successfully improved its performance in a number of important areas such as improving support for pupils and reading for pleasure across the school.

The acting headteacher provided good leadership. She was highly committed to the school and its pupils. In her short time in post, she had made a positive impact on the school. She had reviewed the school's approaches to supporting pupils' learning, improved the school library and provided staff with opportunities to contribute to developments through working parties. The deputy headteacher was taking important steps to reorganise and develop support for pupils. She now needed to broaden her remit to support staff across the school in meeting pupils' individual learning needs. The principal teacher had improved the use of ICT and pupils' knowledge of healthy living across the school. The impact of her work had been reduced due to recent absence. The school's approach to evaluating its work and securing improvement was satisfactory. The acting headteacher used a range of useful procedures to evaluate the work of the school. She monitored teachers' plans, sampled pupils' work and made planned visits to classes. She provided helpful feedback to teachers and tracked pupils' attainment. The tracking of pupils' attainment now needed to become more rigorous to ensure appropriate progress for all pupils. Teachers had used the national quality indicators to audit the work of the school. Pupils and parents were not yet fully involved in evaluating the work of the school. Teachers needed to engage more fully in evaluating classroom practice and sharing good practice across the school. The school, with improved stability in staffing, had a good capacity to improve.

Main points for action

The school and education authority should take action to improve further learning teaching and attainment. In doing so they should take account of the need to:

- develop further the school's approach to meeting pupils' needs by ensuring that tasks and the pace of learning match individual pupil needs more effectively;
- continue to improve pupils' attainment in English language, in particular from P1 to P3;
- use the outcomes from self-evaluation to engage all staff in improving further the quality of learning and teaching; and
- improve issues of accommodation as outlined in the report.

What happens next?

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents. Within two years of the publication of this report parents will be informed about the progress made by the school.

Sadie Cushley
HM Inspector

7 October 2008

Appendix 1 Indicators of quality

The sections in the table below follow the order in this report. You can find the main comments made about each of the quality indicators in those sections. However, aspects of some quality indicators are relevant to other sections of the report and may also be mentioned in those other sections.

How good are learning, teaching and achievement?	
The curriculum	good
Teaching for effective learning	good
Learners' experiences	good
Improvements in performance	good
How well are pupils' learning needs met?	
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory
How good is the environment for learning?	
Care, welfare and development	very good
Management and use of resources and space for learning	weak
The engagement of staff in the life and work of the school	good
Expectations and promoting achievement	good
Equality and fairness	very good
The school's success in involving parents, carers and families	good
Leading and improving the school	
Developing people and partnerships	good

Leadership of improvement and change (of the headteacher)	good
Leadership of improvement and change (across the school)	satisfactory
Improvement through self-evaluation	satisfactory

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

Important features of responses from the various groups which received questionnaires are listed below.

What parents thought the school did well	What parents think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff made parents feel welcome and treated their children fairly. • The school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few parents thought that school buildings were not kept in good order. • Almost a quarter of parents would like more information on the schools' priorities for improvement.
What pupils thought the school did well	What pupils think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers explained things clearly, expected them to work hard and told them when they had done something well. • Teachers helped keep them safe and healthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no significant issues.

What staff thought the school did well	What staff think the school could do better
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school showed care and concern for the welfare of pupils. • All staff enjoyed working in the school. • They felt that the school was well led. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few support staff would like more opportunities to be involved in the decision-making process.

How can you contact us?

If you would like an additional copy of this report

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Executive Director (Education Resources), local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow, G2 8LG or by telephoning 0141 242 0100. Copies are also available on our website <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>.

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If you have a concern about this report, you should write in the first instance to our Complaints Manager, HMIE Business Management and Communications Team, Second Floor, Denholm House, Almondvale Business Park, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA. You can also e-mail HMIEComplaints@hmie.gsi.gov.uk. A copy of our complaints procedure is available from this office, by telephoning 01506 600200 or from our website at <http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to the SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330 fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsso.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website: <http://www.spsso.org.uk/>.

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Footnotes

1. Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers, residential care staff and carers who are relatives or friends.
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