

Widmer End Combined School

Estcourt Drive, Widmer End, High Wycombe, HP15 6AH

Inspection dates 4–5 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
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Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher's strong leadership and clear direction help and encourage senior leaders, staff and pupils to develop their strengths and improve their performance.
- Good leadership of teaching and learning together with effective management of teachers' performance have ensured that teaching is at least good.
- Pupils make good progress because they have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils always try to do their best because they have very good relationships with their teachers.
- Children have a good start to school in Reception. They are interested in their learning and are prepared well for Year 1.
- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are kind and polite and show care and respect for each other. They say they feel safe and enjoy coming to school.
- Members of the governing body know the school well. They are involved in the work of the school and undertake training to deepen their knowledge and understanding so that they can ask the right questions of school leaders.
- The school is held in high regard by parents and carers who say that they find staff to be very approachable. This positive partnership helps parents and carers support their children's learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because:

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure all pupils, particularly the more able, learn exceptionally well. At times, the pace of learning slows and pupils become distracted.
- Although the individual progress of more-able pupils is tracked, their progress as a group has not been studied in depth. As a result, these pupils do not always progress as quickly or as much as they should because their work is not always planned to stretch them fully.

Information about this inspection

- During the inspection, 20 lessons or part-lessons were observed.
- Eleven joint observations of teaching and learning were conducted with the headteacher.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, staff and groups of pupils.
- The inspectors listened to a sample of pupils reading.
- The inspectors spoke to parents and carers and took account of one letter and the 70 responses to the online Parent View survey.
- The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised pupils' workbooks and looked at school policies, including those relating to safeguarding and equality, as well as minutes of meetings of the governing body and planning documents.
- The inspectors took account of the 19 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

Barbara Atcheson, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
David Ingham	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Widmer End Combined School is an average sized primary school.
- Most pupils come from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and the proportion who speak English as an additional language are below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is extra funding provided for looked after children, pupils eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is about half the national average. There are no looked after children or children of service families in the school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs who are supported through school action is above the national average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- A new headteacher was appointed in January 2011 and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in September 2012.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the overall quality of teaching to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - pupils are always interested in their learning and the pace of learning does not drop
 - best practice is shared
 - the more-able pupils are always given work that stretches them and quickens their rate of progress.
- Ensure that senior leaders examine information about the achievement of more-able pupils more closely so that these pupils are given challenging enough work that speeds up their progress.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children's levels of skills, knowledge and understanding on entry to the Reception class cover a wide range but taken altogether, they are broadly at the levels expected for their age. Well-planned, exciting activities at just the right level ensure that the majority of children enter Year 1 at a good level of development.
- A small nurture group provides support for the few children who need extra help. They laugh and respond well when told, 'We are going to paint, we need to put on ...our pyjamas?' and quickly learn that they say 'I can't do it yet' rather than 'I can't do it.'
- Leaders were quick to act when pupils underperformed in the 2013 Years 1 and 2 check on phonics (letters and the sounds they represent). Groups of sounds and letters are now introduced at an earlier age and a comprehensive approach to learning key skills including reading and writing has been introduced across the school. Pupils' work shows that not only has this improved their use of letters and sounds, but it has improved their writing and more importantly, increased their enthusiasm for writing.
- This positive impact is also reflected in their reading. Year 2 pupils read with accuracy and humour, using their knowledge of letters and sounds skilfully to help sound out unfamiliar words. Year 6 pupils enjoy reading. They show that they have a good understanding of the plot and the characters when reading stories, often adopting strategies learned in support groups, to help them get to grips with challenging words.
- Standards at the end of Year 6 are usually above or well above average. A dip in standards in 2013, due largely to some instability in staffing and a large number of new pupils joining the school, has now been reversed. Inspectors' observations of pupils in class and their work in books confirm school information on pupils' learning. This shows that pupils currently in the school continue to make good progress from their starting points and are reaching levels which are well above those expected for their age.
- Extra support is carefully planned to ensure that pupils who benefit from the pupil premium funding achieve well. Checks on pupils' progress show that any gaps in learning are quickly closed so that these pupils do as well as their classmates in reading and are two terms behind in writing and mathematics.
- The school places the promotion of equality of opportunity at the heart of all its work. There is no discrimination. All teachers are held to account for pupils' achievement and pupils' progress is checked at regular meetings. If any pupil is seen to underperform, extra help is quickly arranged. Although more-able pupils achieve well they do not always make the rapid progress they are capable of. The school has recognised that it does not have more-able pupils as a specific focus group and that more could be done to keep a close check on their rate of progress to ensure that they are fully stretched.
- Accurate identification of individual needs and a good range of extra support, including that offered by skilled learning support assistants, enable disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs to make the same good rate of progress as that of other pupils.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Pupils have good relationships with their teachers and want to do their best. Teachers know the pupils well and take care to set work at the right level of difficulty. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, a group of 10 pupils worked in pairs converting decimals into fractions in a game of dominoes. When the teacher checked their learning was secure she moved them on to expressing decimals as percentages.
- In a discussion following the lesson, pupils could talk about what they had learned in a clear, precise way. They knew they needed a bit more practice but said that they had enjoyed the

lesson because they had to make up their own game. They said that the teacher had high expectations of them and that they wanted to do well.

- In a literacy lesson, enthusiastic Year 2 pupils were focused on improving their word power in response to their teacher's probing questions. Their use of phonics was reinforced by the teacher, who used his own excellent knowledge and understanding to ensure that their learning was secure.
- When discussing the lesson later the pupils said they enjoyed writing their own sentences and realised how much they had improved over the course of the lesson. They liked describing themselves in different places and said that the teacher helped them improve by making sure the work was not too easy and not too hard.
- In some classes, there are times when more-able pupils have to go through the work that other pupils do before they get to the part of the lesson that really challenges them. This slows their progress and takes the edge off their enthusiasm for learning.
- Children in the Reception class make good progress because all adults work hard to maintain a warm and friendly atmosphere. This makes children happy learners who are confident to experiment and to go back and practise their skills. Adults join in with children's play to help them to think more deeply, reflect on their learning and to improve.
- In a Year 5 lesson pupils were helped to understand how to convert direct speech into indirect speech when the teacher used pupils' own experiences to act out scenarios and then explored the written process on the board with them.. Pupils with special educational needs had the skilled support of a learning support assistant who ensured extra explanations, practice and support were there if needed.
- There are a few classes where pupils find the work either too easy or too hard. This slows progress and when the work lacks interest some pupils chat and the pace of learning drops.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils' behaviour is good. This is a friendly and welcoming school. The headteacher and her staff set a very good example. Pupils know that they are cared for. This, together with strong opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, ensures that pupils' behaviour is good.
- Pupils are proud of their school and their work and have good attitudes to learning. They are polite, friendly and show that they care for each other. They hold doors open for each other and get chairs for adults, unbidden. Pupils enjoy coming to school regularly. Everyone is punctual and usually no time is wasted in settling down to work.
- Pupils who have been at the school all the way through say that behaviour has always been good. They say that occasionally there is a little pushing in cloakrooms 'because everyone is eager to get into their lessons'. Pupils say that most lessons are fun and that they enjoy their learning. Values such as perseverance and forgiveness are taught in assembly and examples of pupils putting this into action can be seen in their work and on the playground. Older pupils enjoy helping younger pupils at lunchtime.
- Pupils who have recently come to the school say that it is a friendly school. Pupils know about the different sorts of bullying through assemblies and they know it is wrong. They are emphatic that there is no bullying but say that if there was, they would tell an adult and they would be confident it would be dealt with in a quick and fair way. They know about cyber bullying and are confident they know how to deal with it.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are very clear about what to do in a fire drill or a 'lock down'. They can say, without prompting, how to stay safe online: 'Tell an adult and hit the report button!' They are very aware of potential dangers and know that they must not meet up with someone who contacts them over the internet.
- All parents and carers who responded to Parent View agree that their children are happy and almost all agree that they feel safe. The school's incident log has very few incidents recorded, but the school does check the list for patterns and highlights any need for concern.

The leadership and management are good

- Members of the governing body, senior and middle leaders are all agreed that the strong but supportive leadership of the headteacher has helped them to develop and given them confidence so that everyone shares the same approach. They are also agreed that her own caring attitude has created a happy learning atmosphere where good behaviour, good teaching and good learning flourish.
- Leaders work well together as a team, have the same values and share the headteacher's high expectations. They are clear about their roles and responsibilities and are keen to make a positive impact on improving the school's performance.
- Senior leaders have made important improvements such as revamping the school's information and communication technology (ICT) so that pupils have up-to-date equipment. Middle leaders' focus on writing has improved standards from being an area for improvement in the last inspection to standards which were significantly above the national average at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013.
- Teaching is consistently good as a result of leaders' effective checks on teaching and learning, which identify key areas for teachers to improve their practice. Teachers say that good quality training has helped improve their teaching and raise pupils' achievement. However, leaders recognise the benefits of staff continuing to share the good and outstanding practice across the school.
- All staff check regularly on pupils' learning and record the progress each pupil makes. This good practice leads to open dialogue for school improvement among all staff, and is influential in driving up standards. However, although staff check on other groups, they do not currently check on the progress of more-able pupils as a group.
- Teachers' performance is managed effectively. Personal targets are set for all staff and any support needed is identified and provided. Reviews of staff performance tackle weaknesses and recognise and reward improvements in teaching.
- The school has carefully planned how to spend the new primary school sports funding wisely. Gymnastic and dance specialists have been booked to train staff to ensure that the benefits of the funding are sustained. Additional swimming lessons are planned to increase pupils' levels of fitness, while a wide range of out-of-school clubs open to all has the potential to help all pupils to benefit from new experiences and improve their health and well-being.
- The local authority provides light touch support for this good school. Representatives have an annual meeting with the headteacher and provide guidance in analysing school information so that the school can plan future actions.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The members of the governing body play an active role in deciding on the strategic direction of the school. They know the school well because they not only hear readers and help with the gardening club, but they make sure that they are aware of the quality of teaching and learning and talk regularly with leaders, staff, pupils and parents and carers. This means they know the school first hand. They realise that more work has to be done to increase the proportion of outstanding teaching. They understand about the management of teachers' performance and how systems are used to improve the quality of teaching, linked to pay rises as appropriate. They know about how pupils' test results compare to national standards and those of other similar schools. All members of the governing body undertake a wide range of training to increase their capacity to hold the school to account. Courses with titles such as monitoring teaching and learning, Data Dashboard, child protection and teachers' pay and performance are but a few of the many courses attended. As a result governors hold the school rigorously to account, ensuring that statutory duties such as safeguarding are met and that financial resources are managed well. They have a keen awareness of how pupil premium funding is used and the difference it is making and check that money allocated for this purpose is used appropriately.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110335
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	432078

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 of pupils on the school roll	206
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Diane Deanus
Headteacher	Roz Burch
Date of previous school inspection	24–25 June 2009
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