

# Watton Junior School

Brandon Road, Watton, Thetford, IP25 6AL

**Inspection dates** 5–6 November 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	<b>Inadequate</b>	<b>4</b>
Achievement of pupils		Inadequate	4
Quality of teaching		Inadequate	4
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Inadequate	4

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a school that requires special measures.

- For the last three years, standards in English and mathematics have been much lower than those nationally.
- Standards in mathematics have continued to decline.
- Teaching has not been good enough so that pupils' achievement has been inadequate.
- There is inconsistency in the teaching of phonics (sounds that letters make). As a result, weaker readers do not progress quickly and some pupils have poor skills for tackling spelling.
- Pupils are not always clear about how to achieve higher levels, particularly in their writing.
- There is insufficient challenge for more-able pupils in most lessons.
- Pupils in some classes are too reliant on guidance from adults.
- Pupils get restless in those lessons where the pace of learning slows.
- Since the previous inspection, senior leaders and managers have not done enough to raise attainment and improve the school, and they have relied too much on external support.

### The school has the following strengths

- Very recent changes to the school's leadership team are beginning to have a positive impact in supporting teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning.
- Governors are decisive in securing an effective partnership with the local academy which is already benefitting pupils by raising expectations of the standards that could be achieved.
- The school is an orderly community where pupils feel safe and well cared for.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes as well as the support resource base. They visited 15 lessons, some with the acting head of teaching and learning. All teachers were observed during the inspection.
- Discussions were held with pupils, the acting head of teaching and learning, the executive headteacher of the academy and other leaders and managers, as well as representatives of the governing body and the local authority.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read and looked at work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documents, including the school's development plan, performance management documents and safeguarding arrangements.
- The views of the 18 parents who contributed to the online Parent View survey were analysed.

## Inspection team

Karen Heath, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Aleksander Szwagrzak	Additional Inspector

## Full report

*In accordance with the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.*

### Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school.
- It has had a range of leaders since the previous inspection, some of whom were temporary. It has applied for academy status and is currently supported by Wayland Academy and its executive headteacher.
- The newly appointed head of teaching and learning has been absent for the last two terms.
- At the time of the inspection, the acting head of teaching and learning and senior staff with new responsibilities had been in post since September 2013.
- The large majority of pupils are White British, with most others coming from other European backgrounds. The proportion who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils eligible for support from pupil premium funding is above the national average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are looked after by the local authority, and some other groups.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs who are supported at school action is above the national average, as is the proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- A few pupils who have learning difficulties receive part-time support in the school's special educational needs resource base situated at the Wayland Academy. This is managed by the local authority, funded by the junior school but overseen by the academy. Two pupils from Watton Junior currently attend the base for four mornings each week.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is consistently good across the school by making sure that:
  - all teachers use assessments to plan activities which match precisely the next steps in the pupils' learning
  - teachers have high expectations of more-able pupils and set challenging work which meets their needs
  - pupils have enough time to complete tasks and are not dependent on adults telling them what to do next or organising things they need.
- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - the school uses its best practice of phonics teaching so that weaker readers progress and all pupils develop the necessary skills to help with their spelling
  - pupils fully understand mathematical concepts and methods of calculation so that they are able to apply their knowledge and move on to more difficult work quickly and with confidence

- all pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to achieve a higher level in their writing.

■ Strengthen the school's leadership by:

- building on the best practice within the school and through the partnership to ensure that good teaching is sustained
- ensuring that all leaders are appropriately trained so they can effectively improve the quality of teaching in their subjects and be accountable for standards
- monitoring the quality of teaching and holding staff to account for the progress pupils make in their class.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils

### is inadequate

- Achievement varies from year to year but, overall, too many pupils leave with levels well below those expected for their age and move to the next stage of their education without the knowledge and skills they need in literacy and numeracy.
- There has been insufficient improvement in English or mathematics during the past three years. The standards achieved in mathematics dropped further in 2013, when Year 6 pupils left the school about a year behind where they should have been compared with the national average.
- The progress pupils make is not consistent throughout the school and they reach the upper part of the school with too much ground to make up. It is difficult for them to reach the expected levels, particularly in mathematics, because teachers have to fill gaps in their understanding before they can move on to the work expected for their age. The school's recent assessments show that progress is accelerating in Year 6 and a much higher percentage of pupils is expected to reach levels they should by the end of the year.
- More-able pupils do not achieve as well as they could because teachers have expectations that are too low and work is not sufficiently challenging.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs do not do as well as they should, because the quality of teaching has not always met their needs, although the rates of progress for this group of pupils is now improving as they move up the school.
- Pupils known to be eligible for support from the pupil premium make similar progress to their classmates. They now reach levels, in reading, writing and mathematics, which are in line with those of other pupils in the school.
- Pupils' reading levels have been consistently below average, although pupils make better progress in reading as they move up the school. Pupils say they enjoy reading and are happy to talk about their books and why they have chosen them. However, many of the weaker readers do not have the necessary skills to tackle new words.
- Pupils who receive support in the school's resource base make good progress, particularly in developing their reading and writing skills. They have a good grasp of phonics to help them read and spell words; this is not evident in the rest of the school.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language tend to make better progress than other pupils, especially in reading and writing. This is due to the support they receive in small groups.

### The quality of teaching

### is inadequate

- Although teaching is improving, and some good teaching was observed during the inspection, teaching has been inadequate over the past three years. Consequently, pupils have not made the progress they should in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The teaching of mathematics has not been consistent or systematic enough to ensure that pupils fully understand concepts at an early stage, allowing them to tackle more difficult work. Teachers at the top end of the school have too many gaps to fill before pupils can work confidently applying the skills they have learned.
- More-able pupils are often required to do repetitive calculations, most of which they complete

correctly, and there is insufficient challenge for them to apply these basic calculation skills in solving mathematical problems that get them thinking.

- Pupils have writing targets but these are often general statements and are not specific enough to help pupils, particularly the more able, know what they need to do to achieve higher levels.
- The school has timetabled spelling lessons and inspectors observed some creative ways of teaching spellings, which the pupils enjoyed. However, there is not a consistent approach to the teaching of phonics across the school and this means that not all pupils have the right skills to confidently and reliably spell and read new words.
- Most pupils are keen to read. With the guidance of adults, prompting and asking probing questions about a text, pupils respond enthusiastically, sharing their ideas about a story or a character. This helps them to gain a thorough understanding of an author's work. Some weaker readers struggle to read their books. They use inaccurate methods to read new words and this limits their understanding and enjoyment of a text.
- The quality of learning for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is variable and this is reflected in the progress they make throughout the school. This is because the tasks pupils complete in class are not necessarily pitched at the correct level and the support available from additional adults in the classroom has not always been well directed.
- In some lessons, where pupils have the support of additional adults, too often they are not expected to take responsibility for their learning or work independently for longer on their own. They become reliant on being told what they need to do next or have things organised for them when they could be encouraged to do this for themselves.
- Inspectors observed some good examples of teachers' marking with helpful comments to move learning on, and pupils respond to these. However, this was not consistent across the school and some comments such as 'well done', while encouraging gave pupils no guidance on how to improve their work next time.
- The school's focus on improving writing now means that pupils are making at least expected and sometimes better progress in all year groups. In lessons where the teaching was most effective, pupils were keen to explore the use of new words in their writing to make it more exciting or interesting.
- The very few pupils who attend the school's resource base benefit from good teaching. They confidently explore language, for example, by acting as a character in a story and use phonics well to spell words.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils**

### **requires improvement**

- The weaknesses in teaching mean that, although pupils generally behave well in and out of lessons, they have not all developed good learning habits. When the pace of a lesson slackens, some pupils become restless.
- Behaviour over time has improved; pupils conduct themselves appropriately in and around the school. Pupils of all nationalities get along well; they are friendly and confident, showing good manners and courtesy to others. They enjoy the responsibilities they are given to be 'guardians' to the younger pupils or to be a house captain.

- Attendance over time has been below average. The school is active in pursuing absences and, as a consequence, attendance has improved this year.
- Pupils express positive views about the school. They say they feel safe and that 'teachers look after you'. They understand what is and what is not a safe situation and know about different kinds of bullying. They told inspectors all about the anti-bullying weeks and assemblies about bullying.
- Records show that incidents of bullying or unkind behaviour are rare but, when they do occur, these are taken seriously and pupils are confident that issues are dealt with.

### **The leadership and management are inadequate**

- Since the school's previous inspection, leaders have not been successful in ensuring that pupils make the progress they should throughout the school in English and mathematics, or that their progress is consistent in each year. The improvement in Year 6 results in 2012 has not been maintained and pupils leave with levels well below average. The school has been unsuccessful in building the capacity to improve and has been dependent on external support.
- The school has had a turbulent time in the last few years, with changes in leadership and some prolonged absences. While the numbers are relatively small, over half of the 18 parents who responded to the Parent View survey said they did not have confidence in the school's leadership and management.
- The curriculum is planned with a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills. Extra learning opportunities, such as visitors to school for the 'Mad Science' day, as well as trips out, are valued by the pupils. While these contribute well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the curriculum does not meet the needs of all groups of pupils, particularly the most able. This means that the school is not successful in providing the opportunity for all pupils to succeed.
- With the support of the academy, recent changes to the leadership of the school are having an impact on improving the quality of teaching. A new team of senior leaders, including staff from within the school, are receiving training, provided by the academy and its sponsor to equip them to take on their subject responsibilities and to be held accountable for pupils' achievement.
- The temporary appointment this term of an enthusiastic and knowledgeable acting head of teaching and learning, supported by the academy's experienced executive headteacher, has established a positive climate in the school. Leaders are swiftly tackling weaker teaching and they support staff in delivering good teaching, some of which was observed during the inspection.
- Since the start of this term, monitoring and evaluation of the school have been thorough and the new leadership team has accurately pinpointed what the school needs to do. The team has devised an improvement plan and put this into action. This has resulted in an increase in the number of lessons where teaching is good, but it is too soon to know whether this positive impact will be sustained over the long term.
- The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers at this time.
- Pupil premium funding and resources available to support pupils who find learning difficult or those who have special educational needs are combined efficiently and used to provide extra

small-group lessons for some pupils as well as support in class. The additional funding for primary sports is being used to enhance pupils' sporting opportunities and contributes to their health and well-being.

- The local authority has been monitoring and supporting the school for some time and has worked with the school to improve the quality of teaching. However, this has failed to halt the decline into inadequacy and the governors feel that the local authority has not responded quickly enough to the school's present situation. Governors received a warning notice from the local authority during this inspection.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governors have been decisive in establishing an effective working partnership with the local academy to support the school through a difficult time while it is led by an acting head of teaching and learning. Governors convey a clear sense of direction for the school's future as an academy to raise attainment and improve achievement. They are fully aware that the pupils are not doing as well as they should, but absences of key leaders have prevented the governors from addressing some of the issues head on. With the support of the academy, governors have ensured that the school is financially sound and have put investment into resources for improving mathematics. They have used the pupil premium funding to support small groups who have extra tuition out of the classroom as well as additional help in lessons. The governors had been monitoring how effective this was in helping pupils achieve. Governors ensure that the school meets the requirements for safeguarding and that teachers' salaries are linked to pupils' progress.



## 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

<b>Unique reference number</b>	120864
<b>Local authority</b>	Norfolk
<b>Inspection number</b>	425270

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

<b>Type of school</b>	Junior
<b>School category</b>	Maintained
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	7–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	201
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Stuart Stonehouse
<b>Headteacher</b>	Michael Rose (Executive headteacher)
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	6 March 2012
<b>Telephone number</b>	01953 881387
<b>Fax number</b>	01953 884534
<b>Email address</b>	mrose@waylandacademy.org.uk

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