

Inspection of Watlington Primary School

Love Lane, Watlington, Oxfordshire OX49 5RB

Inspection dates:	1 and 2 October 2024
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Outstanding
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The headteacher of this school is Gemma Sterjo. This school is part of Acer Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer, Nathan Thomas, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Jill Cottee.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are happy to attend this school. They describe school as fun and full of kindness. They feel safe and are taught to keep themselves safe. Pupils are reassured by the school's strong safeguarding culture. Pupils across the school have a strong understanding of how to keep both physically and mentally healthy. The school's ample and well-equipped outdoor space provides opportunities to run, climb and play at breaktime and lunchtime.

The school has a thoughtful and consistent way of helping pupils meet its very high expectations of learning and behaviour. As a result, lessons are vibrant and focused, and pupils achieve well. Pupils develop a broad intellectual curiosity to learn more and are encouraged to learn together. If any pupils find managing their behaviour more difficult, staff sensitively help. Pupils are taught about their emotions. They know that their worries are reduced when they are shared, and trust adults to help if they have concerns.

Pupils look forward to the regular trips and visits that take place in every year group. The Years 5 and 6 residential trips are eagerly anticipated. In-school activities, such as Focaccia Friday and regular debates and music, also enrich pupils' experiences.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school has high ambition for all pupils. Staff have a detailed understanding of how to develop every pupil to be successful in their education.

Teaching reading is a strength of the school. In nursery and early years, children enjoy plentiful stories and start to use letter sounds. In key stage 1, pupils receive accurate and precise phonics lessons. The school makes sure that parents know how to support their children when reading at home. Where pupils need extra help, intervention sessions help them to quickly catch up. Reading remains a priority for older pupils. Their daily reading practice is further strengthened by teachers' careful checking of progress. Pupils value the school's library and appreciate its quiet and welcoming atmosphere.

Much of the school's curriculum is carefully considered to ensure pupils make sustained progress in each subject. The school's innovative subject leadership structure gives teachers a shared understanding of the school's curriculums. This results in pupils' knowledge building steadily over time. However, in a few subjects the precise knowledge that pupils need to learn is less well defined. This means that sometimes pupils' learning is less well sequenced, leading to misconceptions and gaps in their knowledge. The school is aware of this and has rightly prioritised the continued refinement of its curriculums.

Pupils have a strong shared understanding of the school's values of 'be respectful, be resilient and be responsible'. As a result, pupils treat each other very well. Relationships between adults and pupils are strong because staff know them well. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are a particular focus. Highly effective identification of needs, and carefully considered adaptations, mean they learn well.

From the very start, in Nursery, children are taught the routines which will help them to thrive at school. Communication is prioritised, resulting in children quickly developing their language skills. Children in Nursery are inquisitive and know how to share and take turns when using the rich and imaginative selection of resources on offer. The school's early years provision is exceptionally well considered. Children benefit from knowledgeable staff who quickly identify and address any area in which an individual child needs extra development. The environment is welcoming, and children quickly build their confidence. Teaching is joyful and helps develop children's excitement about learning.

Pupils are well prepared for their next steps. The school's focus on developing pupils' self-awareness helps ready them for life's challenges and opportunities. All pupils benefit from a rich selection of clubs and activities. Should an activity be unavailable, pupils are supported to start their own club. Activities such as choir visits to a local care home and allotment gardening help pupils to feel part of their local community. Pupils' interest and knowledge of the world around them is nurtured through well-chosen experiences and curriculum resources. However, the school recognises that teaching about the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law are not yet as fully developed as other personal development areas.

This is a school with a deeply held understanding of what children need to thrive. The school ensures that the best interests of pupils are at the centre of the school's development. Staff feel well supported by the school's leaders. Governors and trustees have a strong understanding of the school's ethos and aims.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, leaders have not identified with enough precision what teachers need to teach and when they need to teach it. Pupils therefore do not always build knowledge consistently well across all subjects and at times can find it difficult to recall prior learning securely. Leaders must strengthen and refine the curriculum further so that all pupils achieve well across the whole curriculum.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	147281
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	10339693
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	213
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Jill Cottee
CEO of the trust	Nathan Thomas
Headteacher	Gemma Sterjo
Website	www.watlington.oxon.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school is a member of the Acer Trust.
- The school uses no alternative provision.
- The headteacher, as well as other members of the leadership team and staff body, joined the school since the previous inspection.
- The school includes an on-site nursery provision for three- and four- year-olds.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005. During a graded inspection, we grade the school for each of our key judgements (quality of education; behaviour and attitudes; personal development; and leadership and management) and for any relevant provision judgement (early years and/or sixth form provision). Schools receiving a graded inspection from September 2024 will not be given an overall effectiveness grade.

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection of the school since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, SEND coordinator, curriculum leaders and other staff.
- The inspectors met with the chair of governors and other members of the governing body, members of the board of trustees and the trust chief executive officer.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: reading, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, the inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning, and looked at samples of pupils' work. The inspectors listened to a sample of pupils read.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses to Ofsted Parent View. They also took into consideration the responses to the confidential staff and pupil surveys.

Inspection team

Ed Mather, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Claire Britnell

Ofsted Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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