

Inspection of Watton Junior School

Brandon Road, Thetford, Norfolk IP25 6AL

Inspection dates:	28 and 29 January 2025
The quality of education	Requires improvement
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Previous inspection grade	Not previously inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

The executive headteacher of this school is Helen Kemp. This school is part of Clarion Corvus Trust, which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Jim Adams, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Chris Nichols. The executive headteacher is responsible for this school and one other.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school's community is richly diverse, with many pupils coming from other countries. The school celebrates this diversity and welcomes new arrivals warmly. There is an inclusive culture in which pupils value and appreciate difference.

The 'Respect code' underpins relationships and behaviour at the school. Pupils learn in calm, orderly classrooms. They move around the school sensibly, showing respect for each other and for adults. Pupils enjoy social times. They chat happily in the dining room and play harmoniously on the playground.

Pupils enjoy developing new interests, such as astronomy, at extra-curricular clubs. Trips to castles, a nearby museum or space centres enhance pupils' learning of the curriculum. On 'Passport Day' pupils learn about each other's cultures.

The school is ambitious for all pupils to achieve well. This includes pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and pupils who are in the early stages of speaking English. However, pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 last year was well below national averages in reading, writing and mathematics. A revised curriculum and new approaches to teaching are helping more pupils rise to the school's high expectations. However, more time is needed for recent changes to have the impact the school intends.

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

The school and trust have acted decisively to address the declining standards. For example, they have overhauled the curriculum. The new curriculum is ambitious. It sets out the important knowledge pupils will learn in each subject. It is sequenced clearly so that pupils build secure knowledge over time. However, historic weaknesses in the curriculum mean that many pupils have gaps in their knowledge. These pupils are not building on secure foundations.

In reading, writing and mathematics, staff teach lessons confidently and pupils progress well. In other subjects, teachers' knowledge of the new curriculum is less strong. There are inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, and pupils do not learn as well as the school intends.

During lessons, staff assess pupils' understanding often. At the end of a topic, they check whether the important knowledge is secure. Where these checks identify specific barriers to learning, such as pupils' needs or emerging English, the school is quick to set up appropriate support for pupils. Sometimes, however, staff do not use these checks effectively to inform future teaching, or to adjust the curriculum. Consequently, some pupils' gaps persist.

Overall, the school's provision for pupils with SEND is well matched to their needs. Most pupils with SEND learn alongside their peers. Some follow a more personalised curriculum in the school's specially resourced provisions.

Throughout the curriculum, staff use high-quality texts to broaden pupils' reading diet and foster a love of books. There is a growing culture of reading for pleasure here. Pupils who are at the early stages of learning to read have effective daily phonics teaching to help them to catch up.

Typically, pupils behave very well. They listen attentively in lessons and focus on the tasks set. Overall, pupils have positive attitudes to school and attend regularly. The school takes prompt action when a pupil's attendance causes concern. Consequently, attendance rates are improving. However, more time is needed for the school's work to improve the attendance of some pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. These pupils miss important learning.

The school plans its provision for pupils' wider development thoughtfully. Pupils learn essential knowledge about personal safety, world religions and healthy relationships. They know how fundamental British values such as democracy and the rule of law apply, both in and out of school. An annual careers fair encourages pupils to have aspirational goals.

Trustees, governors and leaders have a shared ambitious vision. Governors hold the school fully to account. Trust leaders provide invaluable support in ensuring those priorities are the right ones. The pace of change has been rapid in recent months. However, the school and trust are considerate of staff workload and well-being. They are supporting staff to fulfil their roles in the drive for improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Historic weaknesses in the curriculum have resulted in gaps in pupils' learning. For example, some pupils do not have basic skills such as transcription or number fluency. In others, they do not have the prior knowledge of a subject required to access more complex ideas. This prevents pupils from building a secure body of knowledge. The school and trust should ensure that staff adapt and supplement the curriculum to address pupils' gaps in knowledge as rapidly as possible.
- In some subjects, staff's knowledge of the new curriculum is still developing. They are less confident about their subject knowledge and about the content of the curriculum. As a result, there are inconsistencies in how well the curriculum is delivered and pupils

do not learn as well as they should. The school and trust must ensure that they support teachers to understand and implement the new curriculum consistently well in all subjects.

- The school's systems for assessment are in their infancy. Staff use various strategies to check pupils' understanding. However, they do not use the information these checks give them systematically to adjust and adapt their lessons. This hinders pupils' progress. The school and trust should embed the assessment systems so that staff effectively adapt their future lessons in order to maximise pupils' progress.
- The school's work on reducing pupil absence needs more time to ensure pupils who are persistently absent attend well. There are still some pupils who do not attend school regularly enough. This means they miss important learning, academically and socially. The school and trust should continue to strengthen their work with pupils and their families to reduce rates of pupil absence.

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 special educational needs and/or disabilities (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	147969
Local authority	Norfolk
Inspection number	10345532
Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	287
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Chris Nichols
CEO of the trust	Jim Adams
Headteacher	Helen Kemp
Website	www.wattonwestfieldandjunior.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school joined Corvus Education Trust in April 2020. In April 2023, Corvus Education Trust merged with Clarion Academy Trust, so the school has been part of Clarion Corvus Trust since then.
- When Watton Junior School's predecessor school, Wayland Junior Academy, Watton, was last inspected by Ofsted, it was judged to be inadequate for overall effectiveness.
- There have been recent changes to the senior leadership team. An acting executive headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have been in post since September 2024. The substantive executive headteacher was not in school during the inspection.
- There is wraparound care before and after school, run by the school.
- The school does not use any alternative provision.
- The school runs two specially resourced provisions for pupils with SEND from this and other schools. One is for up to 8 pupils aged 7 to 11 with social, emotional and mental health difficulties. The other is for up to 10 pupils aged 7 to 11 with learning and cognition needs.

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 evaluation about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID 19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with a range of senior leaders, including the acting executive headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. They met with trust leaders, including the CEO, standards officer, teaching and learning leader and SEND leader. The lead inspector met with governors and trustees, including the chair of governors and chair of trustees.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, history and science. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited a sample of lessons, spoke with teachers, and spoke with some pupils about their learning. Inspectors looked at samples of pupils' work and listened to several pupils read to a familiar adult. Inspectors also looked at samples of pupils' work and the curriculum in other subjects.
- Inspectors visited one of the specially resourced provisions with the school's SEND team. They spoke with staff and pupils in the provision.
- 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.
- Inspectors reviewed a range of school documentation and policies. These included the school improvement development plan, school self-evaluation form, and minutes of governing body and trustee meetings.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school site.
- Inspectors considered the responses to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View. They reviewed the responses to the online staff survey. In addition, inspectors spoke with pupils, parents and staff to gather their views of the school.

Inspection team

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His Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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