

Wavendon Gate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131397
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	360269
Inspection dates	28–29 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Bartleman

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	419
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Andy Eastlake
Headteacher	Mrs Lyn-Marie Hollinshead
Date of previous school inspection	4 March 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 24 lessons observing 16 teachers. Meetings were held with the chair of the governors, senior and middle managers, and parents and carers at the start and end of the school day. Inspectors spoke with groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at improvement plans and key policy documents. There were 116 parents and carers questionnaires received and analysed.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas.

- How effectively the school is improving teaching, assessment and the curriculum in order to raise attainment, particularly in mathematics and for more-able pupils.
- How effective is the quality of teaching in promoting learning and progress?
- The extent to which the school is eliminating inequalities in achievement between different groups, taking into account gender and pupils of different abilities.
- The impact of care, guidance and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Information about the school

This is a larger than average primary school which serves the south-east of Milton Keynes. About three quarters of the pupils are of White British heritage and others come from 15 different minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. A breakfast club managed by the governing body runs daily. The school has gained many awards, including the Healthy School Award and Artsmark Gold.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Wavendon Gate is a good school which has made considerable progress since its last inspection. Key to the success is the high priority given to promoting pupils' personal development and academic achievement. The school is a highly inclusive, harmonious community where all pupils are treated equally. Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities thrive because they feel safe and well cared for and they enjoy the rich and exciting range of activities provided for them in and out of lessons. It is not surprising that attendance is so high. The vast majority of pupils behave well and have an outstanding knowledge of healthy lifestyles. The majority of parents and carers are very supportive of the school. One parent summed up the commonly held view saying, 'We are very happy with the experiences the school is giving our son. He is keen, engaged and progressing well.'

Pupils, no matter their background or ethnicity, achieve well because the quality of teaching is good. Teachers make good use of assessment information to plan lessons that are fast paced and include a variety of relevant and exciting tasks that are well matched to individual needs. Lessons engage and challenge pupils of all abilities, which is made possible by varied activities and aided by effective learning support. Successful efforts have been made to more accurately assess and track pupils' progress. However, marking in mathematics and in the themed curriculum is not consistent and does not give pupils sufficient guidance on how to improve their work. Not enough is known and recorded about children's skills and experience when they first join Reception and this limits the school's view of the progress they make throughout the school and makes it hard for Reception staff to plan for children's needs. The curriculum, with its recent focus on developing literacy and numeracy and strengths in the creative arts, is proving successful in ensuring good progress and eliminating differences between the attainment of boys and girls. It provides a wealth of memorable experiences and has a strong impact on outcomes.

Children get off to a flying start in the Early Years Foundation Stage because provision is good, and they make good progress across the school so that by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in English and mathematics. Pupils' progress has improved significantly over the past three years and is now more consistent. Progress is more rapid in reading than in writing or mathematics, although recent initiatives are starting to have an impact on accelerating progress and raising attainment in these two subjects. Levels are continuing to rise, although fewer pupils than average attain the higher levels in mathematics at Key Stage 1. Work in books and lessons, and the school's assessments of performance, show that pupils currently in Year 6 are making good progress. Care and guidance is outstanding, with well-organised provision and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, ensuring that they make good progress.

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Safeguarding procedures (care and protection of pupils) are outstanding. The school goes well beyond requirements and all processes and procedures are very rigorous. Pupils play an active part in the school and an increasing one in the local community. They develop good awareness of other faiths and cultures through the school's local and overseas links. The arts, music and physical education have a high profile in the school, and make a strong contribution to pupils' good, spiritual, moral and social development.

The headteacher, very ably supported by her deputy headteacher and an effective governing body, has tackled weaknesses with determination. Staff have responded positively to a regime of high expectations. Teamwork across the school is strong in pursuit of improvement. Rigorous monitoring and an effective programme of professional development for teachers and, more recently, teaching assistants have provided the key to unlocking the potential in the school. Self-evaluation is based on rigorous monitoring and is accurate. Given these strengths in leadership and management and the progress that has been made, the school has a good capacity to sustain further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- By July 2012, increase the proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in mathematics by the end Key Stage 1 by further developing their problem- solving and calculation skills.
- Enhance the use of assessment and improve the effectiveness of feedback to pupils about how to improve their work by:
 - ensuring that marking in mathematics and thematic work consistently provides detail about the strengths and weaker elements of the work
 - making sure that questioning and discussion are used to prompt and gauge pupils' understanding throughout lessons
 - ensuring that assessment of children's attainment on entry to Reception is robust so that teachers are able to plan children's next steps in learning.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and are keen to answer questions. The vast majority behave well. They enjoy working in small groups and with partners, when they listen respectfully and contribute their ideas constructively. They make most rapid progress when they are actively involved and given time to reflect on their learning. In the Early Years Foundation Stage children start with skills that are generally below the levels normally expected, particularly in knowledge and understanding of the world and creative development. During their time in the school, all groups of pupils, regardless of background and ethnicity, make good progress so that by the end of Year 6, attainment is above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The school's data show that attainment is rising, and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. A legacy of weaker progress in mathematics and writing at Key Stage 1 is being addressed by the targeted changes that have been introduced, and a wave of improvement is continuing to build throughout the school. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress because of the effective support they receive.

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In writing, pupils are given plenty of opportunities to base their writing on first-hand experiences and to practise their skills in other subjects. In one effective lesson in Year 5 pupils developed an understanding about how the environment can be improved through the teacher's effective questions. Working in groups allowed pupils to negotiate roles and to share and record their ideas effectively.

Pupils have an outstanding understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles. Even the younger pupils can say what foods are good for them and what are best enjoyed in moderation, and why. Participation rates in the wide range of sporting enrichment activities are high. Pupils are proud of their school. They enjoy taking on responsibilities by becoming, for example, play leaders. They are active fund raisers for a range of local and world-wide charities. Pupils' good levels of self-confidence, good manners, their positive attitudes and their rapidly improving attainment in English, mathematics and information and communication technology means that they are well prepared for success in the next steps in their education. Pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident in their good behaviour, their respect for each other and their willingness to discuss and accept other religions and cultures as well as their appreciation of art, music and nature.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	2
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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How effective is the provision?

All teaching observed during the inspection was at least satisfactory, with the large majority that was good. There are very good relationships in lessons, which leads to pupils wanting to do well for their teachers. The good number of skilled teaching assistants provides high-quality support, particularly enabling those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to make the same good progress as their classmates. Teachers' feedback is good in English lessons but less well developed in mathematics and in the themed curriculum areas. Older pupils know the level at which they are working and are clear about what they need to do to make progress, and this has a positive impact on learning. Lessons are typified by a range of different activities which engage the interest of pupils. Although teachers use paired and group discussions regularly, these are not always sufficiently focused. For example, sometimes pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to talk about and discuss scientific concepts to embed their learning. In a good information and communication technology lesson pupils could be heard giving each other advice about how best to reply to an email. The pupils showed good computer skills and benefitted from the discussion by clarifying their thoughts before explaining to other group members. In another lesson Year 4 pupils were able to successfully write a play script because of the teacher's well-structured preparation and modelling of the task.

The well-managed curriculum effectively engages pupils in their learning. Pupils speak knowledgeably and enthusiastically about the themes they study. There is a strong focus on art and music in the school and ample opportunities for sports and physical activities. The school also makes effective use of the staff from the local secondary school to enhance its provision for French, as well as mathematics for the higher-ability pupils, including those identified as being gifted and/or talented. The introduction of a whole-school calculation policy and a focus on writing are proving highly effective in driving up attainment in mathematics and English. There are regular educational trips out, visitors into school and themed events, for example, Money Week 2011, 'Grandparents Day' and a Greek Day, which enrich the quality of learning and add to pupils' enjoyment.

The pupils enjoy the well-managed breakfast club, which runs daily. They are able to get a healthy breakfast and cooperate in good range of activities, which develops their social skills well. The staff know the pupils as individuals and care for them well.

The school has effective and comprehensive systems in place to care for and support pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. Induction arrangements into the Early Years Foundation Stage and transition to secondary school are well managed and effective. Pupils say how caring the adults working with them are. Parents and carers agree, with one summing up the views of the large majority in writing, 'the teaching staff have really captured my daughter's imagination during the Ancient Greek topic. The staff know the pupils well.'

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These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The strong and insightful leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher has been pivotal in driving the school forward and embedding ambition effectively. Middle leaders are becoming increasingly confident in their roles and in the successful drive to raise attainment. They are successfully taking on increasing levels of responsibility and relish their tasks. Good relations with parents and carers have been maintained, and they are kept well informed about their children's progress, although a few would like additional information. Good partnerships with other schools and outside agencies add to the outstanding quality of care and support the school provides. The learning mentors and links with outside agencies are used extremely well to support any pupil with an identified need. The school ensures pupils have a very clear understanding of the school as a community and promotes community cohesion well through good links with the local community and opportunities to explore the diversity of life in the United Kingdom and abroad.

The school is successful in including all pupils fully and providing good provision for equality of opportunity. Discrimination of any sort is not tolerated and pupils, no matter what their backgrounds, feel that, were it to occur, it would be tackled swiftly. Differences in achievement between different groups are closing rapidly. For example, the previous gaps between boys' and girls' attainment in English and mathematics has been reduced, with the more effective use of assessment enabling teachers to target the pupils' needs more closely.

Governors have a good understanding of their strategic role and have appropriate systems to gather information about the school's performance, which they use to hold senior leaders to account. They fulfil their statutory role well and monitor the impact of the decisions they make. They ensure that the breakfast club is well run. Systems to safeguard pupils and their impact on pupils' health and safety are outstanding. Close checks are made on the suitability of adults to work with children, risks are assessed robustly and the security of the school site is reviewed regularly, with the pupils' involvement.

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These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress in the Reception classes and join Year 1 with broadly average attainment in all areas of learning. They make particularly good progress in learning sounds and letters because of good teaching and the well-structured programme in place, which is particularly effective in giving these young children the required building blocks for success in their future reading and writing. Staff create a warm, nurturing environment where children feel very secure. A calm atmosphere prevails and independence is successfully encouraged. Links with families are very strong, enabling parents and carers to participate in their child's learning right from the start. There is a rich range of exciting, motivating experiences, both indoors and outdoors. Detailed planning builds successfully on previous learning, although insufficient use is made of assessments during child-initiated activities. Children are inquisitive and animated. During the inspection, children were excited by the puppets used in a lesson about letters and sounds and in developing their understanding of non-fiction books through 'baby animals'. 'My Learning Journal' books are of good quality and provide valuable insight into how well individual children are progressing. All children have a good early understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Attractive displays motivate children to want to succeed. Currently, however, the assessment systems are not robust enough to identify children's learning needs on entry, particularly in knowledge and understanding of the world, physical development and creative development. Nevertheless, the Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and there is a strong, shared and effective commitment towards sustaining improvement.

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Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

The level of response to the Ofsted questionnaire was broadly average compared with other primary schools. Parents and carers have positive views of the school. Almost all of those who replied to the questionnaire agreed that their children enjoy school and are safe. They praise especially the support and commitment of the staff, and written comments show that most feel the school meets their child's particular needs. A few parents expressed concern over staff and leadership changes, communication and the way behaviour is managed, which were raised with the headteacher. During the inspection, evidence was gained to judge that the school has worked hard to involve parents and carers in their children's learning. A variety made very positive comments, such as 'Our child frequently tells us that she loves school' and 'The staff are incredibly supportive, both to my child and myself.' Those parents and carers who have concerns over the way the school encourages healthy lifestyles can rest assured that such provision is outstanding.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Wavendon Gate School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 116 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 423 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	69	59	46	40	1	1	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	72	62	40	34	3	3	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	58	50	56	48	2	2	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	57	49	49	42	9	8	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	62	53	47	41	3	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	53	46	54	47	7	6	1	1
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	54	47	50	43	12	10	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	38	33	63	54	6	5	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	54	47	50	43	9	8	1	1
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	44	38	54	47	10	9	4	3
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	33	28	63	54	8	7	2	2
The school is led and managed effectively	53	46	50	43	8	7	3	3
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	63	54	47	41	5	4	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



30 March 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wavendon Gate School, Milton Keynes MK7 7HL

Thank you for welcoming us so warmly when we visited your school recently. We really enjoyed meeting you and hearing how much you enjoy school because of all the interesting and exciting things you do. I particularly enjoyed seeing your art work displayed around the school and listening to the lunchtime orchestra. We are not surprised that the school holds the Arts Mark Gold award and that you enjoy school so much. Wavendon Gate is a good school.

We think the best things about your school are that you are making good progress because you are being taught well. You make particularly good progress in your reading and are improving in writing and in mathematics. All adults look after you extremely well and you told us that you feel safe. Part of the reason for this is that there are excellent plans to keep you safe and that all adults treat you all equally.

You make a good contribution to the smooth running of the school through your School Council and all the jobs that you do. The headteacher, governors and staff run the school well. They work closely with your parents so that they can be involved in helping you learn.

There are two things that we have asked your school to improve:

- To help more of you reach the higher levels in mathematics at the end of Year 2.
- To help you do even better in mathematics and the themed curriculum we have asked your teachers to tell you what you have to do to improve your work further in their marking.

You can help them by continuing to work hard and behaving well.

I wish you every success for the future.

Yours sincerely

Mike Bartleman

Lead inspector

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