

Heronsgate School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110389
Local Authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	378094
Inspection dates	14–15 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Paul Edwards

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	395
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dr Tony Ashmore
Headteacher	David Harper
Date of previous school inspection	10–11 March 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspection team visited 18 lessons and saw 16 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body and staff, and informal discussions were held with parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at national assessment data and the school's assessments, samples of pupils' work, school policies and minutes from governing body meetings, as well as curriculum documentation and that relating to safeguarding. Also taken into account were 183 questionnaires returned by parents and carers as well as those from 22 staff members and 112 pupils.

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

- The progress made by pupils in writing, particularly that of the more able.
- How teachers plan work for pupils of different abilities.
- The school's planning for community cohesion and what impact it has upon pupils' awareness of people from different backgrounds.

Information about the school

Heronsgate is larger than most junior schools. The large majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds. Other pupils are from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below that seen nationally. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The school has Healthy School status.

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

Héronsgate is a good school and the quality of education it provides for pupils is rightly appreciated by parents and carers. Pupils' good, and improving, attendance is testament to their enthusiasm for learning. The exceptional quality of care, guidance and support helps pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, to feel safe and enjoy learning.

By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average and this represents good progress from their starting points. The school has made a concerted and effective effort to improve pupils' progress in writing. Increased opportunities to write at length in other subjects have improved pupils' confidence and skills. Teachers use assessment information effectively to plan work that matches pupils' prior attainment. However, occasionally in lessons, teachers do not use the information they have gathered to move more-able pupils on to more challenging work sufficiently quickly.

Pupils' outstanding behaviour makes a significant contribution to their good learning. Pupils get on with their classmates exceptionally well and are keen to take responsibility. They have an extremely strong sense of moral and social awareness, supporting charities and working within the local community. The school has good links with the local community and schools in Africa. The school's community cohesion plan, however, lacks clarity as to how these links and activities are to be evaluated to determine pupils' awareness of people from other backgrounds and cultures. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of visits, visitors and clubs. Pupils' healthy lifestyles are promoted well through the many opportunities to engage in physical and sporting activities.

The school's self-evaluation is detailed and accurate, the result of comprehensive systems of tracking of pupils' progress and regular and systematic monitoring of teaching and learning. Middle managers work closely with the senior leadership team in monitoring pupils' progress and identify and take action where there is any underachievement. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection, consolidating areas of strength and improving areas identified for improvement. For example, the presentation of pupils' work has improved and senior staff have a greater influence on learning through working with colleagues in the classroom.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate pupils' progress further, particularly that of the more able, by ensuring teachers:
 - allow pupils to move on to more challenging activities sooner in lessons
 - provide more opportunities for pupils to find things out for themselves.
- Ensure planning and evaluation for community cohesion identify clearly how pupils are improving their awareness of people from different backgrounds.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Pupils achieve well throughout the school and thoroughly enjoy all aspects of school. They enter school with attainment that is below average. Pupils make particularly good progress in their reading. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are making improved progress in writing, with teachers encouraging pupils to write at length in subjects such as history and geography. Good opportunities for pupils to respond to teachers' questioning and to engage in discussions with their classmates enable their speaking skills also to progress well. For example, in a good history lesson in Year 6, pupils demonstrated good skills in explaining the causes and origins of the Second World War. Pupils' progress in mathematics is good. A strong emphasis on the learning of multiplication tables provides pupils with a good foundation for solving problems. Pupils make good use of the excellent facilities to develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills. The few pupils at an early stage of learning English are supported well, enabling them to develop their vocabulary and to take a full part in lessons. There is no significant difference in the rates of progress made by girls and boys. Gifted and talented pupils are encouraged well through their participation in the schools' 'Nrich' programme which provides regular clubs and activities for them.

Pupils' above-average attendance continues to improve, the result of very effective strategies and good rewards and incentives. This, together with their improving basic skills and opportunities to enhance their enterprise skills, prepares pupils well for the next stage of education.

Pupils feel safe in school and make a good contribution to keeping others safe, for example through the 'buddy' partners. Members of the school council manage their budget well, identifying key areas of expenditure that will benefit pupils. For example, the installation of a 'Trim Trail' makes a good addition to pupils keeping fit and healthy. Pupils have an excellent moral awareness through their support of, and contribution to, a good number of charitable activities. They recently held a charity day to raise funds to send one of their teaching assistants to compete in the 'Dragonboat Race', a major fundraising activity. Pupils work and play together harmoniously and established links with a school in Ghana to promote their

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awareness of other cultures. The school rightly acknowledges the need to establish more accurately the depth of pupils’ awareness and understanding of people from other backgrounds.

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	3
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	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
The extent of pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teachers forge good relationships with their pupils and manage behaviour very effectively. This encourages pupils to contribute confidently in lessons. In a good mathematics lesson in Year 5, for example, lower-attaining pupils were confident in explaining their rationale in arriving at answers to subtraction problems. Teachers mark pupils’ work regularly and systematically, providing them with a clear picture of what pupils need to do next to improve. They regularly assess pupils’ work and plan work that is well matched to the different levels of abilities. However, teachers occasionally miss the opportunity to accelerate the progress of the most able pupils by providing them with too much information or by being required to undertake work that is too easy before moving on to more challenging activities. Teaching assistants make a good contribution to the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to those learning English as an additional language.

The curriculum has a good focus on developing the pupils’ basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is, however, also a good emphasis on promoting their musical, artistic and physical attributes. The employment of specialist staff in these areas contributes well to the enrichment of the curriculum. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils’ awareness of the need to exercise regularly and to eat

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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sensibly, recognised by the school’s Healthy School status.

Staff know the children exceptionally well and keep exceptionally detailed records of their academic and social progress. The ‘Restorative Justice’ programme, that takes place each day, helps pupils to understand that their negative actions have a resulting outcome. The staff work closely with parents and carers to support those pupils who are finding life difficult or challenging, enabling them to improve their attendance or behaviour, or to take part in all the school has to offer. There are strong relationships with feeder infant schools and with the secondary school to which most pupils transfer, enabling them to settle very well.

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?

School leaders embed ambition and drive improvement well because they have a very clear picture of what needs to improve. They have reacted positively to the findings of the previous inspection and a later survey visit, resulting in a positive and sustained impact upon pupils’ progress and the quality of provision. Leaders work effectively to ensure all pupils are provided with equality of opportunity and to ensure there is no discrimination. Pupils from different backgrounds are supported well, enabling them to take a full part in all aspects of the curriculum.

Governance is good. Governors are regular visitors to the school and their monitoring and challenge contribute well to the direction of the school. The school has good links within the local community and internationally, and the school is awaiting a return visit from teachers of a school recently visited in Ghana. While these links contribute to pupils’ awareness of other cultures, the lack of clarity in its community cohesion plan results in difficulty in evaluating its impact. At the time of the inspection, safeguarding procedures were rigorous. There are careful checks on adults who work in school, and health and safety checks are undertaken systematically. There are good links with parents and carers, and the school is considering how these can be improved to help them engage with the children’s learning further. Links with local schools are well established, providing, for example, activities for pupils to develop their enterprise skills at the local high school.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Views of parents and carers

An above-average proportion of parents and carers returned the Ofsted questionnaires. Most expressed their satisfaction with all aspects of the school. A few expressed their concern as to how incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with. The inspection team found pupils’ behaviour to be outstanding and the school has very effective strategies in place to ensure this remains so.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted’s questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Heronsgate 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 received 183 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 395 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	94	51	84	46	4	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	115	63	64	35	2	1	0	0
The school informs me about my child’s progress	64	35	95	52	12	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	52	28	109	60	9	5	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	60	33	107	58	6	3	0	0
The school helps me to support my child’s learning	53	29	111	61	9	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	60	33	106	58	4	2	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)	60	33	97	53	8	4	1	1
The school meets my child’s particular needs	64	35	96	52	9	5	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	58	32	93	51	18	10	2	1
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	42	23	111	61	8	4	4	2
The school is led and managed effectively	68	37	92	50	6	3	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child’s experience at this school	86	47	80	44	6	3	1	1

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	43	47	10	0
Primary schools	6	46	42	6
Secondary schools	14	36	41	9
Sixth forms	15	42	41	3
Special schools	30	48	19	3
Pupil referral units	14	50	31	5
All schools	10	44	39	6

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 2010 to 08 April 2011 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 2010/11 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.



16 September 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Heronsgate School, Milton Keynes MK7 7BW

Thank you very much for welcoming us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed talking to you, looking at your work and watching you learn. This letter is to tell you what we found out about your school and how the school can improve.

- Your school is a good one. It provides you with a good education. Teachers help you make good progress so that your attainment is average by the end of Year 6.
- You say you enjoy school and we saw that in your enthusiasm for lessons.
- Your behaviour is outstanding and your attendance is above average.
- You have a good understanding of the need to eat healthily and of taking plenty of exercise.
- There is a good curriculum with a wide range of clubs, activities, visits and visitors that make your work more interesting.
- The headteacher, teachers and staff look after you exceptionally well. They give those of you who find learning difficult, or who have difficulties, considerable help and support.
- Those in charge of the school are working hard to help it improve.

In order to make your school even better, we have asked your headteacher and staff to do the following.

- Make sure that those of you who learn quickly are given more challenging work sooner in lessons and the opportunity to find things out for yourselves.
- Improve planning to make sure you learn about people from different backgrounds.

You can all help by telling your teachers if you find work a little easy and by trying hard to work things out for yourselves.

Yours sincerely

Paul Edwards
Lead inspector

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