

Wellsprings Primary School

Inspection report

Unique reference number	123710
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	382132
Inspection dates	27–28 June 2012
Lead inspector	Ian Hodgkinson HMI

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 which gives Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (HMCI) the authority to cause any school to be inspected. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	274
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Vicky Thomas
Headteacher	Mark Lunn
Date of previous school inspection	8–9 March 2011
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Age group	3–11
Inspection date(s)	27–28 June 2012
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Introduction

Inspection team

Ian Hodgkinson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Deborah Wring

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out two days' notice. Inspectors observed nine teachers teaching 14 lessons. In addition, the inspection team made short visits to a number of other lessons and activities. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and listened to pupils read. Discussions were held with school staff, including senior and middle leaders, and with the Chair of the Governing Body. Discussions were also held with the school's link officer at the local authority and the National Leader in Education who is currently advising the school. There were not enough responses available from parents and carers to the online questionnaire (Parent View) to process in planning the inspection, but inspectors met informally with a number of parents and carers in the playground each morning to ascertain their views about the school, and looked at the school's own surveys of the views of pupils, parents and carers. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including school development plans, safeguarding documentation and policies, and minutes of meetings of the governing body. Pupils in Year 6 were away on a residential activity week during the inspection.

Information about the school

Wellsprings is larger than the average-sized primary school. It serves an area of residential housing in the north of Taunton. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, is below average. More pupils than usual move in and out of the school during the year.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision is organised in a Foundation Stage unit, combining Nursery and Reception classes. A breakfast club provides meals and activities before the start of the school day. The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress. When it was inspected 15 months ago, the school was placed in special measures.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	2

Key findings

- Wellsprings Primary is a good school. It is not yet outstanding because there remain some shortcomings in the early development of pupils' writing skills. Nonetheless, pupils' achievement and the quality of education they receive have improved rapidly during the past academic year. In accordance with section 13 (4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures.
- Pupils achieve well. Those currently in Year 6 have made good progress to reach broadly average standards in English and above-average standards in mathematics. They show much determination and skill in applying their mathematical knowledge when solving challenging problems. Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils apply their good understanding of phonics (linking sounds and letters) to help them read and write with confidence. However, writing standards are constrained by weaknesses in handwriting, presentation and spelling, especially among younger pupils.
- This year's rapid acceleration in pupils' progress is due to the good, and sometimes outstanding, quality of teaching they receive. Teachers plan thoroughly, and work very effectively with skilful teaching assistants, to ensure that pupils of all abilities are fully engaged in stimulating and challenging activities. Teachers promote pupils' independence by encouraging them to reflect on the quality of their work and that of others, and to recognise how it can be improved further. Activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage, however, do not always give sufficient emphasis to the promotion of children's literacy and especially their writing skills.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe. They are actively involved in setting up and participating in the wide range of clubs and activities that enrich school life.
- Leadership and management are good. The headteacher has been highly successful in raising expectations for pupils' performance and for the quality of teaching, while maintaining a very cohesive school community. The school has drawn extensively on its partnerships with other agencies and schools to enable its teachers and managers to see, share and successfully implement best practice in teaching and learning.

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What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve standards of writing, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, by:
 - developing pupils' handwriting skills to improve their formation of letters and general standards of presentation
 - supporting improvement in pupils' spelling, for example through better access to word banks and dictionaries.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - developing opportunities to promote children's literacy skills through activities in the indoor and outdoor learning areas
 - ensuring that children are well supported to take their learning forward during sessions when children decide for themselves what they wish to do
 - developing more effective monitoring systems in the Foundation Stage unit to secure a consistently high quality of provision so that children of all ages make at least good progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Pupils in Year 6 are on course to continue the upward trend in overall attainment in national tests. This is confirmed by the quality of the work in their books and by the first release of mathematics national test scores received during the inspection, which provisionally indicate above-average results, with over two-fifths attaining the higher Level 5. Across Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils of all abilities, including the more able, relish the challenge of applying their skills in English and mathematics to real-life contexts. In all years, they work with great independence and become adept at identifying challenging success criteria against which they systematically evaluate their learning. Their ability to collaborate constructively in small or large groups offers good preparation for later life. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress as they are guided to learn independently and supported to play a full part in all class activities.

Children join the Nursery with skills which are below age-related expectations. Progress in the Nursery varies between children and their skills remain below expectations overall when they move into the Reception Year. By the end of Reception, children reach the expected level in many areas of learning but writing remains a particular weakness. The development of pupils' literacy skills accelerates from Key Stage 1, where pupils skilfully apply their phonic knowledge to help them read and write in a wide variety of contexts and forms. However, weaknesses in handwriting and spelling, which are particularly evident in Key Stage 1, continue to constrain the quality of writing for some pupils as they move through the school.

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Pupils confidently attempt phonically plausible spellings, but these are not always accurate. The school has been highly successful in developing pupils' interest in reading by ensuring a wide availability of books and materials to appeal to all tastes, and by helping pupils understand how to identify and to read increasingly challenging texts. As a result, reading standards are broadly average overall by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 and more pupils than average reach the nationally expected Level 4 in reading by the end of Year 6. Parents and carers have very favourable views of their children's learning.

Quality of teaching

Teachers make very effective use of assessments of pupils' attainment to ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities and that all groups make good progress in lessons. The school has been particularly successful this year in promoting greater challenge for more-able pupils, which was a key area for improvement in the last inspection. More-able pupils are identified specifically for additional interventions to boost their attainment within and beyond lessons, and teachers are highly alert to the need of any pupil to move to higher level tasks when they have mastered the basic concepts. As a result, substantially greater proportions of pupils are reaching higher levels of attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics this year than last. The proportion reaching the higher Level 3 in writing at the end of Key Stage 1, however, remains low. Teachers are aware of the need to further improve pupils' formation of letters and presentational skills. Throughout the school, pupils do not systematically use dictionaries, word banks or other resources to help with accuracy in spelling. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, while child-initiated free-flow activities successfully promote children's independence and their social skills, not enough opportunities are provided, either indoors or outdoors, to develop children's literacy and especially their writing skills.

Teaching assistants and other adults offer pupils of all abilities highly effective support and guidance. They are fully aware of the learning goals of the individuals and groups with which they work, and plan teaching strategies closely with teachers. They are particularly successful in promoting the learning skills of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs by offering timely and well-judged support but never stifling their independence. Parents and carers overwhelmingly feel their children are well taught, and there has been a steady increase in the numbers using the school's online tracking system to monitor their children's progress and discuss any matters arising with teachers. Inspection evidence supports the positive views of parents and carers. Teachers' marking of pupils' work offers detailed and specific guidance on how to improve, and pupils respond positively. Marking is particularly effective in literacy, and increasingly so in other subjects, with the effect that the quality of work in pupils' books in all subjects has improved substantially during the year. Pupils themselves are skilled in assessing their own work and that of their peers against detailed success criteria, and, as a result, become highly reflective about their learning and progress. Teachers take many opportunities to develop pupils' reflective qualities and promote their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, in a Year 3/4 lesson on Native Americans, outstanding

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teaching ensured pupils thought deeply about the significance of differences between cultures and lifestyles at other points in time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The urgent pace of learning in most lessons ensures that most pupils are fully engaged throughout and behave well. Relationships are good in the playground, and pupils often take the initiative in setting up and running many of the clubs and activities on offer. Through the school council, pupils are encouraged to have their say on school developments and older pupils work responsibly as play leaders with younger pupils. Most parents and carers feel their children are safe and that pupils' behaviour is good, and those who spoke to inspectors made it clear how much their children enjoy school. Most pupils say they feel safe, and most feel that there are staff they can turn to if they need help. They recognise different types of bullying and discrimination, including forms of racial and homophobic bullying, and recent work with a visiting poet has helped them to value and respect diversity and difference. Pupils' attendance declined during the last full academic year and the level of persistent absence rose sharply. During the current academic year, overall attendance has improved and is now average. Persistent absence has reduced markedly as a result of the school's very effective liaison with external agencies and with the families of the pupils concerned, although systems for monitoring patterns in the overall level of persistent absence are underdeveloped.

Leadership and management

The capacity of leaders and managers at all levels to raise performance in the school has improved substantially, enabling the school to move from 'inadequate' to 'good' overall effectiveness in little over a year. The leadership of teaching has made a particularly strong impact. It is grounded in a highly collegiate approach to school improvement which has seen staff and leaders share a collective responsibility for better performance. The headteacher, drawing on the very effective support of the National Leaders in Education and local authority consultants working with the school, has successfully raised expectations and set much more challenging targets for pupils' attainment and progress this year. Teachers have responded with energy and enthusiasm, and have become adept at evaluating their own performance in terms of its impact on pupils' learning and progress. The innovative teacher target sheets draw together the strengths and areas for development from the monitoring of each teacher's lessons and scrutiny of the work of their pupils. Teachers then work to improve their practice in very specific areas. Teachers have been very well supported in developing this practice through observing their peers and provision in partner schools. School self-evaluation is mostly comprehensive and draws on an incisive analysis of a range of monitoring and performance data. This has allowed the school to focus very strongly and successfully on closing gaps in rates of progress between different groups of pupils and thereby promoting equality of opportunity and countering discrimination. For example, it has identified and begun to address weaknesses in aspects of boys' literacy. Monitoring of children's progress and the quality of provision is not so well developed in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and

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lacks sharpness in identifying reasons for variations in rates of progress between children from their starting points to the end of the Nursery Year.

The governing body has significantly improved its capacity to hold the school to account through well-focused training in measuring educational performance and through the allocation of specific monitoring roles for governors. Together with the Parents' Champion, it has enjoyed success in increasing its direct engagement with parents and carers, and to elicit their views on the quality of provision. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. The school offers a broad and well-balanced curriculum, and senior leaders have been active in ensuring that improvements in provision run across subjects and are not confined to English and mathematics. The curriculum and the broad programme of enrichment activities successfully promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.



29 June 2012

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wellsprings Primary School, Taunton TA2 7NF

Many thanks for the welcome you gave to my colleague and me when we visited the school for its recent inspection. Thanks also for the time many of you have spent with me during my visits to the school during the last year. I am delighted to report that the school has improved rapidly during that time. As a result, 'special measures' have been removed.

Wellsprings is now a good school. You make good progress because you are well taught. Some of the lessons you enjoy so much are outstanding. Teachers are particularly good at adapting work so that it is challenging and enjoyable for all of you, including those who find learning easier and those who sometimes need more support. Teachers and other adults encourage you to develop and assess your work independently, so that you become very reflective about its quality and how it can be improved. You behave well and your attendance has improved this year.

The headteacher and other leaders have successfully raised the expectations of what can be achieved by everyone in the school. They check the work of the school carefully and are aware of what needs to be done to secure further improvements. This report identifies two main areas for development to make the school even better.

- Improve standards of writing, and especially the handwriting and spelling of younger pupils.

Improve the way activities in the Foundation Stage unit support children's early development of literacy skills, especially writing.

You can help by continuing to attend regularly, working hard and continuing to get involved with the school's many activities. I wish you every success.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

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