

Wessex Gardens Primary School

Wessex Gardens, Golders Green, London, NW11 9RR

Inspection dates

22–23 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Pupils of all backgrounds and abilities achieve well and are well prepared for their secondary education.
- Good teaching motivates the pupils and enables them to make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school uses additional funding for the considerable number of pupils entitled to the pupil premium very effectively. As a result, these pupils achieve as well as others.
- Pupils are very proud of the school and enjoy everything it has to offer. Consequently, attendance is above average.
- The school is a very harmonious community where pupils of all backgrounds work and play happily together.
- Pupils are very well looked after. They say that they feel extremely safe and they know how to keep themselves safe in variety of different situations.
- Pupils are friendly and polite and behave well around the school. They are keen to learn.
- The headteacher and senior leaders have created a strong staff team, committed to the further improvement of the school. As a result, pupils achieve well and the quality of teaching continues to improve.
- Governors have a wide range of skills. They support the school effectively and check that leaders are doing the right things to improve the school further.
- Pupils really enjoy the many additional opportunities they have to take part in sport, music, the arts and activities that support their academic progress.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teaching is not yet of a consistently high enough standard to enable pupils to make more rapid progress.
- Sometimes, teachers' questioning is not challenging enough and the work provided is not hard enough to enable the more able to
- Sometimes teachers' marking does not help pupils to improve their work and they do not always have the opportunities to respond.
- Children in the Reception classes do not have enough space to develop and practise their skills.

reach their potential.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons. A number of these were carried out jointly with senior leaders. They also looked at pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- They met with senior leaders, a number of other staff with responsibilities, four governors, two groups of pupils and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors considered a range of documentation including information about the progress of pupils, the school's plans for improvement and records related to the safeguarding of pupils.
- The 28 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, were taken into account by inspectors. The 41 responses to the school's own recent survey of parents were considered. An inspector also talked to some parents at the school gate.
- Inspectors took account of the responses from 30 questionnaires completed by staff.

Inspection team

Graham Lee, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Barbara Breed	Additional Inspector
Philip Littlejohn	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a school that is considerably larger than the average-sized primary school. It is much larger than at the time of the previous inspection.
- Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds. The most prominent groups are of Iraqi, Polish and Black African, especially Somali, heritage. Most pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is much higher than average. The proportion of these pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is closer to average.
- The proportion of pupils in receipt of the pupil premium is much higher than average. This is additional government funding provided, in this school, for pupils who are entitled to free school meals and a few who are looked after by the local authority.
- Many more pupils than is usual nationally join or leave the school throughout the school year. A number of pupils only stay for a short periods of time.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school provides breakfast and after-school clubs, which are managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching from good to outstanding by ensuring that:
 - all teachers use questions and set work and activities for the more able pupils that challenge them to reach their full potential as learners
 - marking and feedback always help pupils to improve their work and that pupils have sufficient opportunities to respond to the guidance they receive.
- Improve provision for the Reception classes by giving children more space to develop and practise their skills.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Pupils achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. They make good progress throughout the school, often from low starting points, to reach standards that are broadly average by the end of Year 6. Together with their keenness to learn, this ensures that pupils are well prepared for their secondary education.
- In recent years, children have made a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage and progress well. Many join the school with little or no English, but the gaps between their attainment and that of other children close significantly by the time they move into Year 1.
- Strong teaching in Key Stage 1, results in improving levels of attainment. In 2013, standards were above average at the end of Year 2 and the highest than they have been in the past five years.
- A strong contribution to this rise in attainment is the very effective teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). This teaching provides pupils with a very solid foundation for future learning, especially those pupils who speak English as an additional language and who, therefore, make strong progress.
- Over time, pupils leaving the school at the end of Year 6 have made good progress in Key Stage 2 in reading, writing and mathematics from their different starting points. However, this dipped in 2013 in reading and mathematics for a number of groups of pupils.
- School leaders have analysed the reasons for this dip and put in place effective measures to address it. As a result, pupils in the current Year 6 are making good, and sometimes rapid, progress and are attaining at significantly higher levels than has been the case in the past.
- A particular feature of this much-improved picture is the higher achievement of the most able pupils in Year 6, some of who are working at levels usually expected of pupils well into their secondary education. Nevertheless, in lessons throughout the school, the more able pupils do not always have the opportunities to demonstrate their capabilities.
- Pupils with a variety of disabilities and those who have special educational needs are very well supported, both in and out of class, and make good progress as a result.
- The large numbers of pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium make as much progress as others because of the very effective use of this funding. As a result, the gaps between the attainment of eligible pupils and that of others in the school have all but closed. At the end of Year 6, in 2013, pupils in receipt of the premium were a term ahead of others in writing and mathematics, but a term behind in reading. Current Year 6 pupils supported by this funding, however, are attaining at higher levels than those of their peers in all three areas.
- There are no significant differences currently in the progress of different groups of pupils. Over time the strongest progress has been made by pupils of Polish origin, but all groups, including those of Iraqi and Black African heritage, make good progress. This success demonstrates the school's successful promotion of equality of opportunity.
- The school has highly effective systems to welcome the many new arrivals during term time and accurately assess their levels of attainment. This good practice enables them to settle in and quickly make as much progress as that of others.

The quality of teaching

is good

- The quality of teaching over time is good, which enables pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to make good progress. Some teaching is of high quality which leads to rapid progress for pupils.
- Teachers have very good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well. They have high expectations of their work and behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because teachers present them with information in interesting ways

and provide them with activities that are engaging and mostly deepen their knowledge and understanding.

- Teachers use the information they have about pupils with increasing effect to enable pupils of all abilities to learn successfully, including the least and, generally, the more able.
- Sometimes, however, the level of challenge for the more able pupils is not as high as it might be. Teachers do not always direct questions at these pupils that really deepen their understanding, or provide them with work and activities that fully challenge them to learn.
- Teaching assistants collaborate well with teachers. They are clear about their role in lessons and make a valuable contribution to the quality of learning of pupils, especially disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs.
- Phonics is taught effectively and systematically in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and further up the school where it is needed, so that pupils develop secure reading skills which blossom into a real enjoyment of reading.
- The school is working in partnership with other schools to develop the level of challenge for the more able pupils, through writing workshops for example. In school, teachers are beginning to develop higher levels of challenge for these pupils, especially in Year 6. This was evident, in a mathematics lesson, for example, when these pupils were required to use logic to solve complex three-dimensional problems, usually encountered well into secondary school.
- Over time, pupils have been taught well in the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the Nursery they are provided with interesting and practical activities that develop their learning in all areas, both inside and out of the classroom. In the Reception classes, space is more limited for children to develop and practise their skills and they have no direct access to the outdoor learning area.
- Teachers mark pupils work regularly and consistently in accordance with the school's helpful policy. However, the extent to which written comments help pupils to improve their work is too variable. Moreover, pupils do not always have the opportunity to respond to these comments.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

is good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are welcoming, friendly and polite. They behave well around the school, on the playground and in the dining hall where they respond well to encouragement to eat healthily. The school is a very orderly place and there have been no exclusions in recent years.
- Pupils are very proud of their school and enjoy all that it has to offer. This is reflected in their above average levels of attendance and their willingness to volunteer for a variety of responsibilities, such as peer mentors, in the school.
- In lessons, most pupils are eager to learn. They are keen to answer questions and contribute their ideas. Mostly they respond well to their teachers' instructions and requests. Generally, they cooperate well when working with others and sustain concentration when working on their own. Occasionally, when activities do not capture their imagination, a few lose interest and concentration.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. It is a high priority for all and is embedded in all of the school's policies and procedures and the everyday life of the school. As a result, pupils feel extremely safe and have great confidence in the adults around them. They know how to keep themselves safe in a wide range of situations. Most parents believe that their children are safe and well looked after at school.
- Pupils know about different forms of bullying and say that it is extremely rare in school. This is supported by the school's own records which confirm that discrimination in any form is not tolerated.
- The school fosters good relationships extremely well. As a result, the school is a very harmonious community where pupils of all backgrounds work and play happily together. Invaluable extra support for families is evident in the very well run and attended breakfast and after-school clubs.

The leadership and management is good

- The headteacher's leadership is highly effective and she has created an atmosphere where everyone is valued and there are high aspirations for all pupils whatever their ability, background or circumstances. She is very well supported by an able senior leadership team, an astute governing body and enthusiastic staff.
- The school has maintained the good level of pupils' achievement and quality of teaching since the previous inspection and teaching continues to improve. Issues identified at that inspection have been fully addressed. This indicates that the school has strong capacity to achieve its ambition to be outstanding.
- Information about pupils' progress is now used very effectively by leaders and teachers to track the performance of individuals and groups of pupils. Any potential underachievement is identified at an early stage and action is speedily taken to deal with any weakness.
- This information is supported by regular checks on the quality of teaching and effective systems for managing the performance of teachers and support staff. Teachers' pay is linked very closely to the performance of their pupils and to the training and support teachers need to develop their skills. Nevertheless, these measures have not yet resulted in more rapid progress for pupils or outstanding teaching in all lessons.
- Leaders' evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate. It shows an understanding of what is needed to make further improvements and this, in turn, leads to clear and appropriate plans to bring this about.
- The school has a considerable track record of developing the skills of its staff and enabling them to take on additional responsibilities. Current subject leaders of English and mathematics, for example, have had a significant impact on improvements in their subjects.
- A particularly innovative development has been the creation of a pupil premium committee, which ensures that this additional funding is used to maximum effect to support those pupils who are in receipt of it.
- The curriculum is a real strength of the school. It ensures that pupils of all abilities and backgrounds achieve well in English and mathematics and that they have opportunities to apply their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills in other subjects.
- In particular, the curriculum promotes pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development extremely well and provides pupils with many opportunities to develop their skills and interests in sport and the arts.
- Additional sports funding is used very effectively to provide a specialist sports teacher, swimming coach and access to a wide range of experiences. The take up of these activities is high and is contributing to improvements in behaviour for some pupils and healthier lifestyles.
- The school enjoys productive relationships with parents, most of whom hold it in high regard. One parent, typically commented, 'Wessex is more than a school and we love it.'
- The local authority provides appropriate light touch support for this good school.

■ The governance of the school:

The governors have a wide range of expertise and share the headteacher's ambitions for the pupils at Wessex Gardens. They are very supportive of the headteacher, but also hold her to account for the performance of the school through rigorous procedures for managing her performance. They know about the school's performance in relation to other schools nationally and about particular trends in the achievement of different groups of pupils. Governors are also well informed about the quality of teaching and the systems in place to manage the performance of teachers. Governors ensure that resources are managed carefully and produce value for money, for example in the impact of the pupil premium funding. They also ensure that the procedures for the safeguarding of children in the school are extremely robust and meet statutory requirements.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	131617
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	431266

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	541
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Summers
Headteacher	Katie Dawbarn
Date of previous school inspection	10 February 2009
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