

Heronshaw School

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes MK7 7PG

Inspection dates

23–24 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Outstanding

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Outstanding
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Outstanding
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Outstanding
Early years provision	Outstanding
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school

- The school is excellently led by the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders. Together they have created a culture where staff and pupils flourish.
- The headteacher has systematically and determinedly developed the staff so that they have high levels of expertise in teaching and in developing pupils of this age. Teaching assistants across the school make a particularly strong contribution.
- Pupils achieve very highly at the school. Key Stage 1 results are well above average, indicating strong progress from starting points. An above-average proportion reach the expected standard in phonics (the sounds that letters make).
- Disadvantaged pupils are very well supported and in 2015 the gap closed between their achievement and that of other pupils in the school and others nationally.
- Children in the early years setting make very strong progress due to highly effective leadership. The changes made to the way learning is organised have accelerated their progress.
- The work done to ensure that every pupil reads well is excellent and has enabled pupils, and children in early years, to make strong progress in reading, whatever their starting points. The most-able are very well served by the school's approach.
- Leaders, teachers and assistants have imbued the pupils with a very strong work ethic, a love of reading and writing, and a desire to excel.
- Pupils behave exceptionally well. Teachers and assistants are expertly trained in how to support pupils in maintaining high standards of conduct.
- Highly effective leadership of pupils who have special educational needs or disability has enabled those with additional needs to make strong progress, especially in communication and speech.
- The school's new approach to assessing pupils' learning without National Curriculum levels has been very well implemented. It successfully dovetails with existing strong assessment practices, for example those used in physical education (PE).
- Safeguarding is highly effective and pupils say they feel safe. Procedures are robustly monitored.
- Pupils benefit from a vast array of extra-curricular clubs which make a strong contribution to the school's successful promotion of social, moral, spiritual and cultural education. Additional sports funding is being used very effectively.
- Governance is excellent. Governors make a very effective contribution to the school's success because they rigorously monitor their impact on driving the school forward, and challenge themselves and school leaders to do better where necessary.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that teaching and assessment in all non-core subjects is as highly effective as that found in the best practice in the school, for example in PE.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding

- The headteacher leads the school exceptionally well. Working in close and successful collaboration with the deputy headteacher and the governing body, she has moulded a dedicated and professional team of staff who are all committed to doing the best they possibly can. This culture of excellence means that pupils receive very effective teaching and support. As a consequence, they achieve highly, develop a love of learning and relate very well to others.
- Emanating from the headteacher's strong example, staff have very high expectations of themselves and pupils. These expectations propel the work of the staff who ceaselessly strive to make the experiences pupils have, from the moment they arrive to the moment they leave, as good as they can be. This is well exemplified by the quality of the experience pupils have during playtimes, at after-school clubs, and in their phonics learning groups. Of particular note are the visits staff make to local pre-school providers to share with them how phonics is taught in this school. This enables children to start their reading journeys as early as possible.
- Leaders carefully monitor every aspect of the school's work to check that it makes a deep enough contribution to moving pupils forward in their development and learning. Where further improvement is needed, it is swift, systematic and highly effective. Actions taken as a result of leaders' monitoring are rigorously analysed to ensure they are making a substantial enough difference to the pupils. In evaluating improvements, leaders make excellent use of pupils' views and responses.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher develop staff very effectively. By continually enhancing the capabilities of all staff, they have improved outcomes for pupils. Teachers work closely with the headteacher and deputy headteacher who model, exemplify and explain effective practice. For example, when teachers trial new methods they are videoed. This is so they can carefully evaluate the impact of any new approach on pupils' learning and make changes so their efforts have an even greater impact. This generates an ethos of self-improvement, which in turn has made a substantial contribution to high-quality teaching, learning and assessment throughout the school.
- Due to the headteacher's excellent leadership, staff are totally motivated to do the best they can for the pupils and therefore staff hold themselves to account with great rigour. All staff, including assistants who deliver phonics sessions, feel fully responsible for the progress of those they teach. They make effective use of information on pupils' progress to identify for themselves how they can be better and set themselves improvement goals.
- Performance management is a highly effective mechanism for developing staff professionally, rewarding those who do well and ensuring that the strong sense of accountability teachers have delivers excellent results for pupils.
- Subject leaders have used their highly developed subject knowledge to revise the curriculum so it affords opportunities for pupils to develop deep knowledge as well as progress onto harder topics. Of particular note is the way the curriculum has been structured in mathematics to support pupils in developing a broad range of skills in Year 1 to developing depth of learning in Year 2.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have effectively ensured that the new approach for assessing pupils' work using age-related expectations raises standards. They have successfully guided subject leaders in this and consequently the set of indicators developed by these leaders, for the subjects they manage, are demanding. Teachers make good use of these indicators to identify whether pupils have the level of knowledge, skills and understanding they need to reach age-related expectations. This is helping pupils to be better prepared for 2016 tests and assessments which are more challenging than previous tests.
- The school's approach to tracking pupils' progress is outstanding. Approaches that worked well when teachers used National Curriculum levels last year have been effectively developed so they work with the new way teachers have of assessing pupils using age-related expectations: for example, analysing the progress of pupils who have high starting points to see if they are exceeding age-related expectations and supporting them further if they are not.
- The school has used funding to support sports and PE very successfully and achieved the PE quality mark with distinction. It has extended the range of activities available to pupils and improved staff skills in the teaching of PE. Pupils' great enthusiasm for physical activities was very apparent in a PE lesson observed during the inspection. Notably, in this subject very good use of assessment is made to improve pupils' fitness and skills levels. The leadership of some non-core subjects is not as developed as it is in PE.

- There is a dedicated leader to promote social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of learning. This aspect of the school's work is very effective because the leader makes sure that different strands link together through the school's values. To assist in this, each class teacher keeps a 'scrapbook' of photos and comments to record events and experiences that promote these aspects of learning. The scrapbooks are well linked to displays around school, such as the one on fundamental British values, and take pride of place in every classroom. The class scrapbooks indicate the immense importance the school places on being tolerant of the religions and cultures of others, and that the school is promoting British values well.
- The leadership of special educational needs is highly effective because the special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) works very well with the school's leaders and teachers, as well as external agencies, in the planning and delivery of tailor-made interventions. Her work is especially effective for those pupils who struggle with speech, language and communication. The SENCo closely monitors the impact of all the additional support targeted pupils receive. For example, pupils with additional needs who are failing to make progress in phonics are provided with effective support in a small group, but if this does not improve their reading quickly they are supported one to one.
- The SENCo has usefully worked with year leaders in analysing information on pupils' progress to pinpoint specific weaknesses, and uses her strong subject knowledge to train teachers in approaches designed to have greater impact on improving outcomes for targeted pupils. These are proving to be successful.
- The school has very successfully engaged parents in their children's learning through placing easy-to-use phonics material on the website and 100% of those who completed Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, said their child is happy. The vast majority would recommend the school. One parent commented, 'The staff at the school are all amazing and have a genuine love for teaching and the children. My daughter goes into school and leaves smiling!'
- Due to the school's success, the local authority support has been 'light touch'. The headteacher has made very good use of an external independent consultant to provide the school with the high level of challenge she and the governors feel is appropriate to ensure that the school continues to improve. The school's leaders support the local authority in their work with newly qualified teachers and provide support for a local special school.
- **The governance of the school**
 - The governing body makes an exceptionally effective contribution to the school's success. Just like the staff at the school, it has dedicatedly made itself as good as it can be, in order to do the best job it can for the pupils. Governors made particularly effective use of the audit they conducted, identifying strengths and weaknesses in their skills, and have systematically sought to strengthen areas identified as weaker. To this end, governors have received training from the local authority on analysing data. Governors know the school very well because, as well as now using information which compares pupils' performance with others nationally very effectively, they visit lessons. They also gather the views of parents, pupils and staff, which they use well to target further improvements.
 - Governors rigorously monitor the progress of all pupils they deem as vulnerable to check the impact of any additional funding, including additional funding for disadvantaged pupils. This more pluralistic approach is because so many disadvantaged pupils at the school have other needs as well. Consequently, disadvantaged pupils in 2015 did better than their peers.
 - Performance management is excellently overseen by governors and, because it is so well carried out, it makes a big contribution to moving the school forward. Teachers eligible to move up the pay scale are required to complete an application form and be interviewed. Although all who applied progressed in their pay last year, the school ensures that only those who perform to its exacting standards are remunerated.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are very effective. The headteacher leads this aspect of the school's work very well. When pupils' needs are such that they require assistance from the local authority, referrals are made swiftly, timelines and records are kept scrupulously up to date, and the impact of the involvement of external agencies is monitored closely.
- The school's family liaison officer collaborates very successfully with the local authority's social care services. She has worked with the authority to develop an in-house course to help families that need assistance. She carefully monitors the impact of her work and if more input is needed, she refers families to the local authority in a timely manner.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is outstanding

- Teaching, learning and assessment across the school are of a very high quality; much is outstanding, including in the early years setting. This is because improving teaching is placed at the heart of the school's work. Teachers view themselves as professional learners; they ceaselessly seek to improve their practice.
- Reading across the school, including in early years, is taught exceptionally well. Pupils make very strong progress from their starting points. The entire school, including early years, is placed in ability, rather than age, groups for phonics. Those leading the sessions provide the right level of pace and challenge to meet the needs of their group. Some pupils, the majority of whom are in Year 2, are now fluent readers and no longer require to be taught phonics. They are being well catered for by doing additional spelling, punctuation and grammar, as well as guided reading. This enables them to develop accuracy in their writing, as well as more complex reading skills, such as the ability to make predictions in stories.
- Pupils reach very high standards in mathematics. Teachers have well-developed subject knowledge which they use to ensure that the tasks set are suitably challenging and enable pupils to become fluent in key mathematical calculations. Pupils make very good use of mathematical equipment and resources, such as cut-out shapes, which teachers provide to help them understand abstract ideas, such as division.
- Pupils write very well. This is because reading and writing are part and parcel of their schooling from the moment they arrive. From the moment they join the early years setting, opportunities abound for them to make marks and form letters, discuss how words are formed by blending sounds and think carefully about their word choices. By the time they reach Year 2, the vast majority can sustain writing in the past or present tense, use vocabulary that engages the reader, and shape their writing into paragraphs. Pupils can introduce additional ideas into their sentences to indicate cause and effect.
- Teachers' use of assessment is excellent. Of particular note is how effectively teachers annotate pupils' work so it provides them with a 'ready reckoner' of what gaps pupils have in their learning, including their ability to complete tasks independently. In this way, teachers achieve genuine insight into each pupil's 'learning world'. They expertly use this to ensure that pupils receive the guidance needed to apply their subject-related understanding, skills and knowledge when completing challenging tasks independently. As a result, pupils' work is of a high standard.
- Teachers' and leaders' analysis of pupils' writing is very sophisticated and has led to teachers having a strong focus on ensuring that targeted pupils start writing tasks quickly so they can fully develop their ideas in the time given. Very good use is made of voice recorders to enable pupils to remember what they want to write and maintain the flow of their writing.
- The teaching of some non-core subjects is very effective, especially PE. The coordinator has ensured that pupils develop and extend their knowledge of keeping fit and the skills required to do well in different sports. She makes very good use of assessment to identify the skills which pupils need to focus upon in training sessions. Most-able pupils effectively coach others as to the best ways to develop these skills. Pupils are required to reflect on the purpose of sport in society and how to maintain high levels of fitness. However, in a small number of non-core subjects, teachers miss opportunities to deepen pupils' subject knowledge. For example in science, some most-able pupils were keen to develop their scientific vocabulary further but good opportunities for pupils to do this were not provided.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. Pupils are as committed to their learning as their teachers. They often work studiously, self-regulating the noise they make as they industriously complete tasks set.
- Pupils collaborate with each other very effectively and are especially skilled at providing support for their partners when sounding out letters to form words in phonics sessions. The way they do this is effective because it has been very well modelled by teachers and assistants.
- Pupils communicate articulately and sensibly about how they feel as regards their learning, their school and their sense of well-being. The school makes good use of pictures of faces showing different emotions to ensure that even the youngest children are able to share their views.

- To grow pupils' sense of self-awareness and reinforce the school's values, at the end of every break and at the end of the school day, all staff work with pupils in small 'circles'. The aim of these is to foster self-confidence and self-worth. Pupils respond to questions, such as, 'Where do you go if you need help?' Occasionally the questions asked do not require pupils to think deeply enough. However, this daily act of sharing, listening and reflecting makes a strong contribution to the school's positive ambience.
- The school has worked very closely with pupils and parents to ensure that messages about how to stay safe when online are driven home. For example, online safety forms part of the personal development programme. The importance of being safe when online is emphasised in induction meetings held with parents. The headteacher has been trained in the 'Prevent' agenda and consequently uses these meetings effectively to alert parents to the dangers of children being radicalised when online.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. This is because teachers and assistants have very high standards which they enforce very well by reminding pupils of their expectations and rewarding good behaviour. Teachers and assistants make explicit links between pupils' good conduct and the values cherished by the school: honesty, kindness, respect, friendship, working as a community and achieving success. These values are effectively reinforced by displays in central areas of the school and by teachers in lessons. The pupils who excel in these values are rewarded in whole-school assemblies and this successfully serves to encourage others.
- The leaders have thoughtfully considered how to make the school as harmonious as it can be. For example, following checks made on the way lunchtime supervisors interacted with pupils, the headteacher has successfully trained the lunchtime supervisors in how to manage large numbers. This has led to calmer lunchtimes.
- Attendance is well above average because pupils enjoy coming to school and find learning exciting. They are well supported if they feel unwell or unhappy. There is very little bullying at the school because the playground has been very well organised so there are lots of safe, quiet spaces. Leaders take rigorous action to ensure that incidents of any kind are resolved immediately. School council members are on hand to give support to their peers and the 'rainbow' room is available for any pupil who is concerned about playtime.
- The school supports pupils who have additional behavioural needs. Teachers and assistants work with these pupils very effectively to help them develop strategies to cope with their emotions. However, on rare occasions, these pupils do struggle to stay calm and on such occasions the headteacher takes appropriate actions to keep them and others safe.

Outcomes for pupils

are outstanding

- Pupils achieve highly because they are taught very well. In 2014 and 2015 in Key Stage 1 tests and assessments, pupils performed significantly above the national average.
- In 2014, an above-average percentage of pupils achieved high scores in reading, writing and mathematics. In 2015, this was the case for writing and mathematics but not for reading. This was due to the high proportion of pupils who had special educational needs or disability in the year group who made very strong progress from their starting points but did not attain high scores in reading.
- The excellent way that phonics is taught in ability groups across the school has led to higher standards with pupils gaining above-average results in the national phonics check in Year 1. Predictions using practice tests indicate that the phonics test results will be even better in 2016.
- Due to close and effective monitoring by leaders, all pupils make strong progress in reading. From September 2015 to January 2016, just under half the school progressed to the next band in their reading.
- Progress is very strong for all pupils in Key Stage 1, enabling them to build well on their strong progress in early years, which has led to higher starting points for those starting at junior school. Standards at the end of the key stage, already above average, are on course to rise further.
- The achievement of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is a major strength of the school because of the carefully tailored help they are given and the high expectations of staff. These pupils make good progress from their starting points and some make exceptional progress.

- Disadvantaged pupils achieve exceptionally well. In 2015, the majority attained better than other pupils in the school and other pupils nationally. The school's close monitoring of pupils' current progress indicates that there is no gap in Years 1 and 2 between their achievement and that of their classmates. Gaps in the achievement of disadvantaged pupils in the Year 1 phonics test narrowed in 2015 and are set to narrow further in 2016.
- Pupils from different ethnic groups make similarly strong progress. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make at least the same progress as their classmates. As their command of English grows, any previous gaps in learning rapidly close. When this process is not as speedy as expected, bespoke additional support is provided.
- Pupils achieve high standards in PE due to the very effective leadership of the subject. The subject coordinator has enhanced her own knowledge of PE and sports through training, and has successfully used her additional knowledge to improve standards.

Early years provision

is outstanding

- The early years is outstanding because of the clarity, commitment and drive of the early years leader, who has worked relentlessly to make the setting effective so children make strong progress from their starting points. Children are therefore academically and emotionally ready to start the next stage of their learning. They settle into the routines and rigour of being a Year 1 pupil very well.
- Children's responses are stringently monitored to check if planned activities are delivering the anticipated gains. Assistants have been very well trained so their checks are well focused on gathering evidence from what the children say and do. Assistants make very good use of these checks to identify the questions they need to ask children to develop aspects of their learning when supporting them in play activities.
- The leader has ensured that the setting provides a rich learning environment, with numerous opportunities, both inside and outside, for children to begin to write and read. Following a research project carried out with the headteacher to develop his own teaching, the leader radically reorganised the structure of activities to good effect. Now small numbers participate in play activities on a rolling programme throughout the day, while the majority work in class with their teachers doing well-targeted literacy and numeracy interventions. This is in addition to formal teaching.
- The revised structure has accelerated children in gaining strong skills in the key areas of reading, writing, numbers and shapes, and successfully maximised the opportunities for children to work with their teacher. As one consequence of this, children are fluent in using language that is related to subject knowledge. For instance, when inspectors asked children how old they were, one replied, 'I am four plus one step,' indicating that children possess both the language and the understanding to apply key mathematical concepts.
- The children in the setting read well; they join the rest of the school for phonics lessons to ensure that they access reading materials at the level that is right for them. Children understand how to develop as readers, and the connection they need to make between sounds and letters in order to do this.
- Parents participate very well in helping children with reading at home. They are helpfully guided in this by the useful leaflets on the school's website, which include approaches to use when listening to their child read from the books they take home.
- The environment is safe and stimulating and children behave very well. Assistants and teachers successfully invest in gauging how children feel about coming to school and use children's responses to make changes that further support their safety and well-being.
- Children move seamlessly into their phonics groups with a minimal amount of fuss. They enjoy learning to read and, entering the real and imaginary worlds that reading opens for them, they learn effective collaboration skills as part of phonics. They use these skills well when back in the early years setting.
- Outcomes are strong across all areas of learning and the proportion reaching a good level of development in 2015 was well above average. This is set to rise in 2016. The gap between the proportion of disadvantaged children reaching this level and others narrowed considerably in 2015. Predictions based on the most recent assessments indicate that disadvantaged children will do better than their classmates in 2016.

- The approach to assessing where children are when they join the setting is accurate and detailed, and the results of assessments are used very effectively to plan learning. This year some children started with levels of development in reading that were below those typical for their age. The leader made excellent use of this, and other information from baseline tests, to target children for support but also to set individual children learning targets. These were shared with parents, teachers and assistants. This has led to very good progress from starting points.

School details

Unique reference number	130953
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10003495

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	235
Appropriate authority	The local authority
Chair	Mr Ian Northover
Headteacher/Principal/Teacher in charge	Mrs Melanie Saunders-Short
Telephone number	01908 608380
Website	www.heronshawschool.co.uk
Email address	office@heronshawschool.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	8–9 February 2011

Information about this school

- The school is a little smaller than average for a primary school.
- Since the previous inspection there have been significant staffing changes, including the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher who both took up post in September 2013.
- Approximately two thirds of the pupils are White British, with the rest coming from a wide range of other ethnic heritages. Just under one in five pupils speaks English as an additional language, which is slightly above average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is very slightly above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils who are supported by pupil premium funding is well below average. The pupil premium is extra government funding to support the education of pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- There is a before-school club that operates in the school and is managed by the school's governors.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning during lessons in each class. Shorter visits were made to observe the teaching of phonics on two separate occasions, and pupils were also observed at breaktimes and around the school. Inspectors also conducted a scrutiny of pupils' books. Inspectors also visited the before-school club.
- The team met formally with a group of pupils from the school council, and spoke to many others informally. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 were heard to read. Two pupils took inspectors on a guided tour of the school.
- Inspectors met informally with parents, spoke with the local authority and made a telephone call to an independent consultant who supports the school.
- Inspectors examined a variety of documentation particularly that related to pupils' progress, the school's own evaluation of its work, development plans and how the school keeps pupils safe.
- The inspection team held meetings with year leaders, subject leaders and with several members of the governing body. Newly qualified teachers were met, as were a selection of teachers and assistants who had participated in focused training led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher.
- The inspection team took note of 40 replies to Parent View, and studied the written comments that parents made online. The results of 16 returns from a survey of staff opinion were also considered.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Kusum Trikha	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Cook	Ofsted Inspector

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