

Whitelands Park Primary School

Sagecroft Road, Thatcham, Berkshire RG18 3FH

Inspection dates

1–2 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher and executive headteacher have effectively combined their experience and expertise to ensure the school provides a good quality education for its pupils.
- Leaders prioritise both the welfare and academic needs of pupils. They work unfalteringly to ensure pupils are cared for and achieve well.
- The new special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) is improving provision so it is better matched to pupils' needs.
- Teaching is effective; agreed approaches are consistently applied. Teachers know pupils' strengths and weaknesses very well.
- Subject and phase leaders use their strong subject knowledge to train and support teachers well, so new approaches are consistently and effectively implemented.
- In key stage 1, in 2016, an above average proportion reached the expected standard, showing strong progress from their starting points. This was a noteworthy improvement on previous years' key stage 1 results.
- The school's own information shows that current pupils are making strong progress. In particular, progress in key stage 2 is now improving, including for disadvantaged pupils.
- In 2016, in key stage 2 national tests, pupils' progress from their starting points was broadly in line with average. This was a big improvement on 2015, when pupils' progress was significantly below average.
- Disadvantaged pupils in 2016 made progress broadly in line with others in key stage 2 national assessments in mathematics and reading.
- Children are taught well in the early years. An above average proportion of children, including disadvantaged children, reached a good level of development in 2016.
- Pupils behave well and give of their best. They show pride in their work and school. They are safe and well looked after.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social, and cultural (SMSC) learning is enhanced very well through opportunities to contribute to school life and the wider community.
- Governance is highly effective. Governors and trustees have robustly tackled areas of weaknesses so the school is now good.
- The school has rightly implemented far-reaching changes to mathematics teaching. Leaders have not yet undertaken a thorough evaluation to establish whether new approaches are having the anticipated impact.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Leaders should rigorously check whether changes to the teaching of mathematics are enabling pupils to develop their mathematical reasoning skills to sufficient depth.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher and executive headteacher have combined their expertise and experience to good effect. They, and the rest of the staff, have worked unfalteringly to ensure the school improved rapidly after converting to become a sponsored academy and, as a consequence, it is now good. Leaders place meeting the needs of pupils at the heart of all they do.
- Of note is the impact of the senior leaders, who have substantially evolved their practice since first joining the senior leadership team. They have built effectively upon the initial raft of improvements the new headteacher made. Staff and parents support these changes. One parent commented, 'The standard of teaching and discipline is way above what it was and it's really good to see the positive changes.'
- The headteacher made root and branch changes when he joined the school and successfully raised leaders' and teachers' expectations of what pupils could do and achieve. He has ensured that new approaches are dedicated to enabling pupils to reach their potential, whatever their starting points. In particular, the school's environment is smart and aspirational.
- Leaders and governors have high ambitions for all, and, consequently, apply high standards when judging the quality of education provided by the school. While acknowledging improvements have been made, they rightly identify that more needs to be done to improve pupils' attainment in key stage 2, especially in mathematics.
- Most subject and year leaders check how well the implementation of new approaches is going. In particular the English leader's checks are sharply focused. She assiduously follows these up to see if teachers have implemented suggested improvements by, for example, scrutinising pupils' work. However, the impact of wide-ranging, new approaches in mathematics has not yet been as rigorously evaluated.
- The curriculum has been effectively developed. Leaders have ensured that the new areas of study outlined in the national curriculum are covered well. Of note is the way pupils now access more challenging topics in reading and in science. Leaders have extended the breadth of pupils' studies through the introduction of creative subjects, such as music and art. These are sparking pupils' imagination and providing effective opportunities for developing their creative, organisational, and interpersonal skills.
- Leaders have further developed the way they assess learning now national curriculum levels are no longer used. As a result, they have as full a picture as possible of the depth and range of each pupil's learning. Leaders use this information effectively to identify pupils who need additional support. This support is very well matched to needs because it is based on diagnostic analysis of the gaps pupils have in their learning.
- The SENCo is new in post and in a short period of time has made sensibly focused, necessary changes to provision. She has ensured that additional funding is spent more effectively. In particular, she has ensured that teachers are better trained to meet the needs of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Also, additional support is now focused more precisely because its impact is monitored more rigorously.
- Disadvantaged pupils overall are making progress in line with others and some are

making especially strong progress. Leaders carefully check that the high proportion of disadvantaged pupils who also have special educational needs and/or disabilities, receive the right kind of assistance. Reports about how the school disburses the funding are impressive because each activity is closely linked to targets that are set for improving outcomes for this group of pupils, including attendance.

- SMSC is very well promoted. Opportunities to explore ethical issues are well-planned and form a substantial element within the personal development programme. Additional clubs and experiences are deliberately tilted towards the arts and music and include a number of after-school choirs, music clubs, and music-focused trips. Of note is the way artistic and cultural experiences are effectively combined, so that pupils learn about, celebrate, and value the artistic heritage of a wide range of cultures.
- Creative learning experiences also provide a rich seam of opportunities for the exploration of fundamental British values, such as tolerance. For example, pupils crafted Chinese lanterns for a diversity parade in the locality. Fundamental British values are also successfully emphasised in prominent displays around the school and assemblies.
- Sports premium funding is put to good use. Following the school's own rigorous review of external providers it has been well spent on providing opportunities to share expertise in-house. The grant has also been used effectively to ensure pupils participate in local tournaments and also to facilitate pupils' participation in clubs, especially raising disadvantaged pupils' participation.

Governance of the school

- Governance is very strong. The local governing body works in close partnership with the trustees of the multi-academy trust. Governors and trustees sensibly coordinate their challenging questions for leaders as well as their responses to leaders' updates. This watertight approach strengthens the lines of accountability within the trust.
- Governors effectively oversee that support provided by the main school in the trust is appropriate and swiftly deployed. The governing body places the needs of the pupils at the fore when making decisions about staff performance and deployment. Governors have robustly held leaders to account for delivering their promises as regards key stage 2 improvements.
- The governing body vigilantly checks that additional funding is having the desired impact on disadvantaged pupils' outcomes. Where governors feel it is not, funding is re-allocated to projects that they assess as having the potential for deeper impact on pupils' outcomes. A good example is the challenge governors provided to the school for spending pupil premium funding on assisting some families in buying school uniform.
- Governors are linked to each subject area and other aspects of the school such as safeguarding. They make detailed and thorough checks on the areas for which they are responsible. They have not yet gained a comprehensive enough insight into the impact of changes to the teaching of mathematics.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff receive regular updates and leaders make careful checks to ensure all staff have completed training online on the

'Prevent' duty.

- There are two designated leaders, including the headteacher, who rigorously scrutinise that all records are up-to-date and detailed. The 'listening ear' checks are noteworthy. Leaders personally carry these out on a weekly basis so as to ensure that pupils with identified concerns know the names and whereabouts of the staff with whom they can talk confidentially. This helps pupils feel very well-cared for at school.
- The designated leaders have strengthened processes and procedures for flagging up concerns about pupils. In particular, the paperwork for recording concerns provides helpful reminders as to what details should be included. In addition, leaders have ensured they have trained key staff so they are able to provide bespoke support for pupils and parents who have concerns. This includes support on how best to manage emotions.
- The routes available for the school to follow up on any referrals they may make to the authority have been strengthened. This is as a result of helpful liaison between the executive headteacher and the local authority's safeguarding leaders.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Far-reaching and systematic improvements over the last two years have led to effective teaching, with some practice being very strong. One parent commented, 'I cannot fault the teaching, it's incredible and inspiring.'
- Pupils learn well and make strong progress. They focus intently on their work and often answer teachers' probing questions in detail. Pupils benefit from the chance to discuss complex questions with their classmates, before providing a definitive answer. This helps them refine and hone their responses.
- Teaching is particularly strong in key stage 1 because there is a high degree of consistency in the way reading, writing, and mathematics is taught. Agreed approaches are tightly implemented, especially the focus on developing pupils' ability to explain what they are learning.
- Pupils are clear about how they learn best and could describe to inspectors how teachers' support and guidance enables them to complete challenging tasks to a high standard. One said, 'We sometimes think our work is going to be hard, but after the teacher talks us through it, we find it easier.'
- Writing is effective because pupils are taught how to self-evaluate, focusing on how well they develop ideas and use key grammatical structures. In some classes, this process has been successfully enhanced so pupils review each other's writing. For example, pupils benefited from the chance to look freely at their classmates' writing, using what they saw to sharpen up their own expression. This approach supported all writers, including the most able, because their classmates' writing engaged them as readers and challenged them to do better as writers.
- Subject and senior leaders' recent and substantial changes to mathematics teaching are improving pupils' fluency in calculation. Pupils in upper key stage 2 are tested regularly so teachers have a high degree of specificity about where there are gaps in pupils' learning. They use this to ensure additional assistance is precisely targeted. However, leaders have not yet checked to see if this approach sufficiently provides

pupils with the depth of mathematical reasoning skills required to succeed in national tests.

- Reading is effectively taught in both key stages. Of note is the key stage 1 leader's tight oversight of the overall progress pupils are making in phonics. She very adeptly combines her granular knowledge of the key sounds that pupils find hard to master with her razor-sharp understanding of agreed approaches, to ensure every pupil develops their early reading skills.
- Reading is effectively promoted with most-able readers accessing a wide range of challenging texts, from the well-stocked library. The school's current focus on developing the range and sophistication of pupils' vocabulary is supporting the confident readers in fully understanding the nuances in challenging texts, and also helping less confident readers.
- Teaching in science is effective because pupils are given the opportunity to explore the way scientific concepts play out through experiments. They are taught how to use data from experiments in their explanations.
- Creative arts are a strength in the school. Pupils learn well in art and music and develop their practical and analytical skills. Pupils learn from the teachers' demonstrations of techniques, because of the well-planned opportunities for them to apply them in their own work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Some aspects are exceptionally strong, such as pupils' keen and helpful responses to teachers' requests and the studious atmosphere that pervades many classes. However, it is not outstanding because, although attendance has improved this term, leaders' actions have not yet shown impact over a sustained period of time.
- Work done to raise pupils' self-esteem through becoming more involved with the school and wider community has been particularly effective. Pupils run a school bank, participate in weekly school council meetings and regularly raise money for charities. This is having a positive impact on their sense of self-worth and self-confidence.
- Pupils are proud of their school and the way behaviour is now better and more conducive to learning. Pupils generally present their work neatly, taking care over it. One pupil commented, 'We celebrate good work to make us feel proud and so we can make it the best we can.'
- The school has placed great emphasis on teaching pupils how to be proactive in staying safe when online. It has been a focus in assemblies and displays around the school, and represents the school's strong response to concerns identified by pupils and staff.
- Pupils attend well because they enjoy school. Attendance figures for 2016 show that attendance was slightly above the national figures. During the last academic year, the school focused on improving the attendance of groups of pupils with higher rates of absence. Effective support was provided for the families of pupils whose attendance

was low, especially disadvantaged pupils. The school also introduced rewards for pupils whose attendance substantially improved. The strong attendance of disadvantaged pupils since the start of the autumn term, which is above that of other pupils, is noteworthy.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is now good. The school's leaders worked hard to bring behaviour into line following a period of turbulence. Good use was made of external agencies to support staff in managing some pupils' challenging behaviour. During the inspection, pupils and parents commented how much behaviour has improved at the school. One parent said, 'The school sets out clear boundaries and the children respond well.'
- Behaviour is not yet outstanding because occasionally, when pupils' learning is less well-structured, they lose concentration and go off task.
- Rewards and sanctions are used effectively. In particular, each class devises its own set of rewards that dovetail well with whole-school rewards. There is a clear and transparent ladder of consequences for poor behaviour. These consequences are consistently applied when pupils make the wrong choices.
- Since 2014, the number of exclusions has reduced considerably. On very rare occasions, as a last resort, the school has successfully used fixed-term exclusion, to ensure behaviours that place others at risk desist.
- Incidents of bullying are rare and pupils told inspectors they felt safe during break and lunchtime and that when incidents occur they are dealt with well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Over the past two years pupils' progress has improved due to better teaching, with teachers focusing more incisively on meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils who have spent most of their primary phase of education at the school since it converted to being an academy do better than older pupils, who have had a legacy of poor teaching. Consequently, key stage 1 results from 2016 are stronger than key stage 2 results.
- The school has strong evidence that leaders' determined efforts will mean that key stage 2 outcomes in 2017 will be higher than in 2016 and that key stage 1 results will continue on their upward trajectory. This evidence includes work in pupils' books, which is of high quality and accurately assessed, and internal test results. These tests show that new approaches are improving pupils' outcomes. Consequently, areas in which some pupils' attainment at key stage 2 were not as strong as anticipated are now much better, for example, reading comprehension.
- Pupils' progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics in key stage 2 improved from 2015, when it was significantly below average, to being more in line with average, in 2016. This is despite the increased challenge of the 2016 national tests. The school's own information, supported by inspection evidence, shows that

pupils currently in Year 6 are making strong progress from their starting points.

- Key stage 2 writing attainment and progress results from 2016 have not been included in the early published data due to an administrative error. The school's own information shows that, due to effective teaching, pupils' attainment in writing was stronger than in mathematics and reading, and closer to the national average. However, in 2015, when national tests were assessed differently, pupils' attainment in key stage 2 was at least line with the national average, and slightly above in writing.
- The strong improvements to pupils' achievement in key stage 1 are particularly noteworthy. Even with the increased challenge of key stage 1 national assessments, achievement was well above average in 2016. This shows strong progress from starting points. Most-able pupils in key stage 1 achieved highly, with a greater than average proportion working at greater depth, especially in mathematics.
- Phonics is very well taught, with the majority of pupils reaching the expected standard in the 2016 phonics check and predictions for 2017 being even higher. In 2016, the proportion of disadvantaged pupils reaching the expected standard in the check was low. However, two thirds of the group had special educational needs and/or disabilities. This year, leaders have placed an intense focus on ensuring a greater proportion of pupils, especially disadvantaged pupils, achieve the expected standard in the phonics check. Consequently, outcomes in phonics are set to increase further in 2017.
- Following additional support provided by the school, in key stage 2, disadvantaged pupils' progress was broadly in line with that of others nationally (for reading and mathematics). There were very few most-able disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 last year, typically fewer than five. Similarly, in key stage 1, there were typically fewer than five disadvantaged pupils in total undertaking national assessments in 2016. Where numbers are so low, progress is reviewed on an individual basis.
- Leaders closely track the progress of disadvantaged pupils currently in the school. The vast majority are making progress which is at least as rapid as others in the school from similar starting points. Those few whose progress is not as strong receive carefully planned additional support to boost their progress, for example, 'rocket classes' after school. Practice tests mean that staff providing additional help understand precisely where pupils have gaps in their learning.
- Most-able pupils in key stage 1 achieved highly in 2016, with a well above average proportion of pupils working at greater depth in writing, reading and mathematics. Most-able pupils currently in key stage 2 make strong progress because they are given the opportunity to carry out additional research, ask the teacher challenging questions and discover how abstract concepts play out in real life.
- Extensive changes have been made to the way pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported. Their work in books, as well as the school's own records, show this group of pupils now make stronger progress than is indicated by published data for 2016. Of note is the thorough way in which the SENCo monitors the progress of this group and ensures staff, and the pupils themselves, are clear about what will help pupils do better.

Early years provision

Good

- Effective leadership means early years provision is good. It is not yet outstanding because some aspects of adults' questioning are currently being developed, as they are not as strong as other elements of the provision.
- Strong outcomes mean children leave the setting fully ready for the challenges of key stage 1. In 2015, the proportion of pupils reaching a good level of development was well above average. Strong and sustained improvements led to a rise in the proportion of children reaching a good level of development in 2016.
- Disadvantaged children are particularly well supported by staff, and where necessary receive extra one-to-one help. Adults target this group of children, as well as other groups identified from the baseline tests as needing additional help. In particular, they develop their skills during child-led play activities. In 2016, a higher proportion of disadvantaged children achieved a good level of development than others within the setting.
- The setting is well led and staff make very good use of their assessments to ensure their questioning enables children to develop their literacy and numeracy skills. Activities are planned carefully so they are bespoke, thus enabling children to move forward rapidly from their starting points.
- Children behave in a calm and considerate manner and cope well with moving between activities. In particular, children fully engage with the stories adults read aloud to them. They are able to answer the questions adults pose about the characters in the stories, and, in so doing, develop their early inference skills. Questions that adults plan are more probing than some of the impromptu questions adults ask children while they play.
- The setting's leaders have ensured parents are extensively involved in supporting their youngsters' learning at home, especially by sharing carefully chosen, age-appropriate books with their children.
- The environment in the setting effectively supports learning. In particular, children have well-planned opportunities to explore the physical world using play equipment, communicate with their peers through role play and develop their counting skills.
- Children are safe and well cared for. Staff know each child's needs well. They quickly spot when children are exhibiting early signs of anxiety and use carefully planned strategies to prevent their feelings from escalating.

School details

Unique reference number	140407
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10019856

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	312
Appropriate authority	The academy trust
Chair	Sandra Nicholls
Headteacher	Matthew Irving
Telephone number	01635 862517
Website	www.whitelandsparkprimary.co.uk/
Email address	headteacher@whitelandsparkprimary.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- In January 2014, the school converted to become an academy, sponsored by the Kennet School Academies Trust. Kennet School is the main school in the trust and Whitelands Park Primary is the only other school currently within the trust.
- Whitelands Park Primary is a larger than average-sized primary. The majority of pupils are white British and the proportion of pupils eligible for additional funding is slightly below national averages.
- The proportion of pupils identified as requiring additional support because they have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. The proportion of pupils who have an education, health, and care plan is well below average.
- The school meets the government's floor standards, which are minimum expectations for progress and attainment. Floor standards for 2016 are not yet published.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its

website.

- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- 2016 key stage 2 writing attainment and progress results have not been included in the early published data due to an administrative error.
- No pupils attend provision off-site.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors made visits to observe learning in all year groups, including in the early years. They also attended an assembly and briefly dipped into after-school clubs.
- Samples of pupils' work were scrutinised by inspectors on two occasions. On the second occasion, leaders undertook the book scrutiny alongside inspectors.
- Inspectors met with a group of pupils, and also heard a separate group of pupils read.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher on several occasions, and separately with a group of subject leaders, including the English and mathematics subject leaders. Inspectors also held a separate meeting with a group of staff, including teaching assistants. The key stage 1 phase leader, who is also the English lead, met the lead inspector and then undertook short visits to classes accompanied by the lead inspector.
- Meetings were also held with the SENCo, and on a separate occasion with newly qualified teachers along with initial teaching education students. Inspectors also met with the physical education coordinator.
- Inspectors held meetings with the chair of the local governing body, who is also the chair of the academy's overall board of trustees. The executive headteacher was also involved in this meeting. An additional telephone call was made to the chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors reviewed the 55 responses made by parents to the online parent survey, Parent View. Inspectors also reviewed the 19 comments made by parents using the free text facility within the online parent survey and an email from a parent and the 29 paper copies of the staff questionnaire. Inspectors spoke with parents, informally, at the end of the school day.
- Documentation and policies, which included the school's own evaluation and development plans, were reviewed. Inspectors scrutinised the school's safeguarding records, including safety checks made when teachers are appointed and teachers' files.

Inspection team

Sarah Hubbard, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Kevin Parfoot	Ofsted Inspector
Christine Bulmer	Ofsted Inspector

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