

Wessex Gardens Primary School

Wessex Gardens, Golders Green, London NW11 9RR

Inspection dates

29–30 November 2017

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	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, who is ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides strong and determined leadership. As a result, this is a good and improving school.
- Leaders, including governors, work effectively as a team to bring continuous improvements.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils and the quality of teaching is good and improving. Consequently, pupils make good progress.
- Governors are highly skilled and knowledgeable about school improvement. They are very ambitious and they support and challenge senior leaders effectively on the work they do.
- Staff are highly committed and supportive of the school's leadership. Staff morale is strong. Parents think highly of the school.
- Children in the early years receive effective care and support and benefit from good-quality teaching. As a result, children make good progress and are prepared well for Year 1.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced and promotes pupils' engagement in their learning. The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of additional activities and visits.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and appreciate their teachers and teaching assistants. Pupils' attendance is above average.
- Pupils feel safe, supported and well cared for. Pupils' behaviour is good and they have positive attitudes to learning.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development effectively. Pupils are taught British values well and they are prepared fully for life in modern Britain.
- Sometimes the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged consistently to ensure that they make the progress of which they are capable.
- In some classes, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to practise and develop their writing skills.
- Sometimes pupils do not apply their thinking skills well enough to help them understand the meaning behind words they read.
- Some subject leaders have yet to develop fully their skills in checking and improving the quality of teaching.
- Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not routinely focus on the progress of different groups of pupils.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are challenged consistently so that they make the progress of which they are capable
 - there are sufficient opportunities for pupils to practise and improve their writing skills through extended pieces of writing in English and other subjects
 - there are more opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their thinking skills to help them understand the meaning behind words they read.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - the skills of subject leaders, particularly in foundation subjects, are strengthened so that they have a greater impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning
 - leaders have a sharper focus on the progress of different groups of pupils when checking the quality of teaching.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher is ambitious and has worked effectively with leaders to create a culture of high expectations for pupils and staff. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and improving and pupils make good progress.
- Leaders, including governors, have an accurate view about the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They work together productively to bring about improvements.
- Leaders have robust procedures for monitoring the performance of staff. They ensure that performance management is linked closely to the quality of teaching, pupil progress and school priorities. There are good professional development opportunities for staff to improve their classroom practice. Overall, leaders manage, support and motivate the staff well. Consequently, the morale among the staff is high.
- There are improved systems in place to track the progress of pupils, including different groups of pupils. The progress of pupils is monitored closely and frequently. This enables leaders to identify swiftly those who are not making the progress they should and provide timely and effective support. In this way, leaders ensure that all groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities, make good progress. This reflects leaders' commitment to equalities and promoting equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils make good progress from their individual starting points. Leaders, including governors, ensure that additional government funding is used effectively to support disadvantaged pupils' academic, personal and social development.
- The leadership of the provision for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is highly effective. The progress of this group of pupils is tracked carefully to ensure that they do not fall behind with their learning. Leaders work closely with parents and external agencies to meet the varying needs of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities. Overall, the additional special educational needs funding is used effectively to ensure that this group of pupils make good progress.
- The physical education and sport premium is used effectively to ensure pupils' engagement in sporting activities and to promote their physical well-being. Specialist sports coaches teach physical education and different sports alongside teachers to enhance the skills of teachers. There is a range of competitive sporting activities and well-attended extra-curricular sports clubs for pupils to develop their physical fitness.
- Subject leaders, particularly in mathematics and English, know the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects and the overall priorities for school improvement. However, the skills of subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching in foundation subjects are not sufficiently developed. Consequently, not all middle leaders are able to contribute fully in improving the quality of teaching and school improvement.
- The local authority is supportive of the school and provides a light-touch support to leaders. The local authority has worked with leaders to improve middle leadership and governance.

- The curriculum is rich, broad and balanced and promotes pupils' good behaviour and achievement. The curriculum engages, motivates and challenges pupils so that they make good progress across subjects. However, leaders know that sometimes the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils benefit from specialised teaching in physical education, dance, music and drama. The curriculum is enriched by a range of extra-curricular activities, including clubs, visits and sporting events.
- The school is highly effective in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, pupils have positive attitudes, know the difference between right and wrong and show respect to each other and adults.
- The school's work on promoting respect for diversity is strong. Pupils learn about other cultures and religions and show respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. The school prepares pupils well for life in modern Britain.
- Leaders actively promote British values. Pupils know about democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. For example, pupils learn about the British court system and participate in democratic elections to elect their classmates to the school council.
- Although there are regular checks on the quality of teaching, there is sometimes insufficient focus on the progress of different groups. Occasionally, leaders tend to focus on what the teachers are doing rather than what pupils are learning.
- Nearly all parents who responded to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View, are supportive of the school's leaders and would recommend the school to another parent. Some of the many supportive comments that parents made to describe the school included, 'I love this school,' 'The school is amazing,' 'excellent staff' and a 'caring school'.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is effective. Governors are skilled, highly committed and ambitious for the school and pupils. They use their knowledge about school improvement well to support and challenge senior leaders effectively on the work they do.
- Governors receive good information on school improvement from the headteacher and other leaders and visit the school regularly to find out things for themselves. Consequently, governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- Governors are involved in the arrangements for managing the performance of staff, including that of the headteacher. Governors check and ensure that senior leaders are improving the quality of teaching.
- Governors manage school finances well. Governors know how the additional funding is used, including the pupil premium and the primary physical education and sport premium. They have a secure understanding of the impact of the additional funding on pupil outcomes.
- Governors ensure that they are fully trained on safeguarding issues, including on the safer recruitment of staff. They visit the school to check for themselves that pupils are kept safe. For example, they speak to pupils, parents and staff and check the information on staff's suitability to work at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Safeguarding and keeping pupils safe are at the forefront of the school's priorities. Leaders, including governors, have created a culture of vigilance where concerns can be quickly identified, reported and acted on.
- All staff receive regular training and updates on safeguarding and child protection. Leaders ensure that pupils are not exposed to extremist or radicalised views of modern Britain.
- Staff are vigilant in spotting potential signs of abuse to pupils and know the procedures for passing on concerns. Leaders act on information in a timely manner and work with external agencies effectively to keep pupils safe.
- Records on safeguarding are detailed, kept in an organised manner and fit for purpose. Pupils are taught well on how to keep themselves safe, including when outside of the school. Leaders work closely with parents, including parents of vulnerable pupils, to keep pupils safe.
- Pupils said that they feel safe in the school. Nearly all of the parents who responded to the online survey Parent View and all of the staff who responded to the staff questionnaire agreed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have created a strong culture of learning where expectations are high. Consequently, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school is good and pupils make good progress.
- Staff are highly committed and know individual pupils well. There are strong working relationships and trust between staff and pupils that motivates pupils to achieve well.
- Classroom environments are stimulating and well organised, with displays and prompts that support pupils' learning, particularly in their language and vocabulary. Pupils are provided with rich opportunities for speaking and listening in lessons. This particularly help pupils who are at early stages of learning English to make good progress.
- Pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities are supported well by staff to help them complete their work. These pupils also benefit greatly through effective small group and one-to-one support provided by skilled teaching assistants.
- Resources are used well to support pupils' learning. For example, in a Year 6 science lesson, pupils made good use of technology to find out facts about micro-organisms. In a Year 5 lesson, the teacher used 'haunting music' as a background to support pupils' descriptive writing based on 'The Graveyard Book' by Neil Gaiman.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers' secure subject knowledge engages pupils and consolidates their understanding well. For example, in Year 2 mathematics lessons, teachers modelled a range of mathematical operations to help pupils solve a variety of calculations. Pupils used mathematical vocabulary correctly to explain their answers. Overall, pupils are encouraged routinely to use their thinking skills to solve

mathematical problems.

- Staff use questioning well to test and deepen pupils' understanding. Teachers provide effective feedback to pupils about their work to acknowledge what they have achieved and how they can improve further.
- The teaching of phonics is good. Pupils enjoy their phonics sessions and use their knowledge and skills in phonics well to read difficult or unfamiliar words. This is contributing to pupils' love for reading. However, there are sometimes insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their thinking skills to understand the meaning behind the words they read.
- Pupils' writing is improving and pupils write well for different purposes. However, there are sometimes insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length to develop their writing skills further. Occasionally, the over-reliance on worksheets in English restricts writing because only shorter responses are required.
- Sometimes, the most able pupils are not provided with challenging tasks to extend their learning. Occasionally, they have to wait for more challenging work.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils are keen to learn and have positive attitudes to their learning. This impacts well on the progress they make.
- There is a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal, social, physical and emotional well-being. The relationships between pupils and staff are warm and friendly. Consequently, pupils are happy and feel well cared for.
- Pupils are kind, polite and respectful to each other and to adults. They enjoy their learning and are proud of their school.
- Parents are very appreciative of the workshops and parenting classes run by the school to support their children's learning and development. Learning mentors are effective in providing additional support to promote the welfare of pupils and families.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves healthy. They speak positively of the healthy food choices they have at lunchtimes and the opportunities to develop their physical fitness. The breakfast club provides healthy options alongside opportunities for pupils to interact with each other and share any concerns with adults.
- Pupils said that they feel safe at school and spoke positively about the site's security. Pupils are taught well on how to stay safe from potential risks to their safety, for example when crossing roads and using the internet. Older pupils know about the dangers associated with cyber bullying and what to do should an incident occur.
- Pupils said that they get on well with each other and bullying is very rare in the school. They said that racist or homophobic name-calling is not an issue in the school. They feel confident that a member of staff would 'sort things out' if they had any concerns about their safety.

- Pupils said that behaviour is good. However, they said that sometimes a few pupils lose concentration during lessons and this gets in the way of their learning.
- Pupils enjoy the range of responsibilities they are given that develop their confidence, for example as elected members of the school council, as 'ambassadors' to show visitors around the school and as house captains. Year 6 pupils enjoy being 'young leaders' and members of the 'safety team' to interact with and look after the younger pupils. This prepares pupils in Year 6 well for their next stage of education.
- Staff and almost all parents feel that children are safe and well cared for at the school.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The culture of high expectations has ensured that behaviour in and around school is consistently good.
- Breaktimes, playtimes and lunchtimes are harmonious occasions where pupils get on well with each other and socialise, irrespective of their backgrounds. However, some pupils are not as careful as others when eating their lunch in the hall and food is sometimes dropped onto the floor.
- Pupils are keen to learn and often help each other to succeed in their tasks. Disruption by pupils in lessons is rare. Staff deal with any incidents of poor behaviour well so that the learning for others is not interrupted.
- Attendance is just above the national average and improving. Persistent absence is low overall. However, the attendance for pupils who speak English as an additional language was below average in 2016. This was largely due to some parents taking pupils out of school to celebrate religious festivals and for extended holidays abroad. Leaders have been effective in reducing such absence through working more closely with parents.
- Nearly all of the parents who responded to the online survey, Parent View, agree that the school makes sure that pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Pupils currently at the school are making good progress in a range of subjects, including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The school's own monitoring system shows that pupils across the year groups make good progress from their different starting points. This is confirmed by the book checks carried out by inspectors and leaders.
- Pupils' attainment is affected by a much higher than average proportion of pupils entering and leaving the school other than at normal times. Overall, about one third of the pupils are mobile; many of these pupils are at early stages of learning English. Although these pupils make good progress, their attainment is variable. This is particularly the case for pupils who start late in the year or have missed learning in prior year groups. Leaders' own tracking system shows that non-mobile pupils achieve better than mobile pupils.

- In 2015, children left the Reception Year with attainment that was below the national average. However, at the end of key stage 1 in 2017 their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly average. However, pupils' attainment in reading was weaker than in writing and mathematics.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils attained broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Standards in English grammar, punctuation and spelling were markedly above average. Standards in reading were weaker than in writing and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics has improved over the last three years.
- In 2017, the proportion of pupils in Year 1 who achieved the expected standard in the phonics screening check was above the national average. The teaching of phonics is good and pupils use their skills in phonics well to read with increasing confidence. Consequently, pupils enjoy reading and their love for books is growing. However, some pupils do not apply their thinking skills to help them to understand the meaning behind words they read.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language receive effective small group and individual support from skilled teaching assistants. Teachers ensure that there are plenty of speaking and listening opportunities for this group of pupils. As a result, they make good progress from their starting points.
- The disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make good progress across the year groups in reading, writing and mathematics. They receive effective support from teachers and teaching assistants. Their progress is sometimes better than their classmates. About one third of disadvantaged pupils also have special educational needs and some are at early stages of learning English. This impacts on their attainment.
- The proportion of most-able pupils reaching the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with the national average. Leaders know that sometimes the most able pupils are not sufficiently challenged in lessons. However, the current most-able pupils, including most able disadvantaged pupils, in the school are making good progress across the curriculum.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is stronger than in reading and writing. Pupils enjoy mathematics and apply their skills well to solve a range of challenging mathematical problems.
- At the end of key stage 2 in 2017, pupils' progress in writing was weaker than other pupils nationally. Pupils do not routinely write at length and across different subjects to improve their writing skills.
- The outcomes in some of the foundation subjects are not as strong as those in English and mathematics. This is because some subject leaders are not fully involved in checking the quality of teaching and learning for their subjects.
- The provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is strong. This group of pupils receive high-quality care and support to ensure that they make good progress from their starting points.
- Overall, pupils make good progress from their low starting points and are prepared well for the next stage of their education.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start in the early years with skills and abilities that are below, and sometimes well below, those typical for their age. By the time the children leave Reception, they have made good progress from their different starting points in all areas of learning. In 2017, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development by the end of the Reception was above average. Children are well prepared for Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years is strong. Leaders know the early years strengths and areas for improvement. Leaders work with other schools effectively to ensure that the assessment system is accurate. Children's progress is tracked carefully and those falling behind are provided with effective additional support. This information is used well to bring about improvements. For example, leaders have targeted support for boys and disadvantaged pupils through 'boy-friendly activities' and improving the outdoor provision. Consequently, the attainment of boys and disadvantaged children has improved.
- There is good quality of care and support for children. Leaders work closely with staff to ensure that they are supported and their training needs are met. Consequently, the quality of teaching is good and improving.
- The early years is a calm, engaging and stimulating environment. Children are familiar with routines and show confidence and independence through self-selecting a range of activities. There is a good balance between indoor and outdoor learning. Children are eager to share their achievements with visitors. For example, a boy in the Reception class was very keen to show and discuss the features of the 'house' he had made out of Lego, complete with a garden and animals.
- There is a good focus on activities to promote children's physical development and motor skills after leaders identified these as weaker areas. For example, children in the Reception class timed each other as they controlled the ball around obstacles with a hockey stick. Children recorded their results and were keen to beat each other's time to complete the activity.
- Staff pay close attention to developing children's skills in early writing through 'mark making' in the nursery. Children in the Reception practise writing their letters and learn the sounds they make to read and write simple words.
- Children show strong attitudes to learning and their behaviour is consistently good. Children respond positively to staff's instructions and follow routines well. Children are kind, share resources and collaborate well with each other.
- There are strong links with parents to help them support their child's learning. Parents are provided with regular information on the progress their child makes. Parents, for example, have access to online information on how well their children are learning and contribute well overall to the assessment information.
- There are rich opportunities for children to enhance their speaking and listening skills. Adults interact very well with children to promote dialogue and model spoken English effectively through good questioning. This particularly helps children at the early stages of learning English to make good progress. However, occasionally children in the

nursery have fewer opportunities to develop their early language than in the Reception. Leaders are aware of this and the good practice in the Reception is being shared well with staff in the nursery.

- Leaders know that they need to do more to ensure that the most able children are consistently challenged; this is consistent across the school. Staff's planning now has a greater focus on the most able children to ensure that their needs are met consistently.
- Children are supervised closely and looked after well by very caring staff. Staff are fully trained to keep children safe and leaders ensure that safeguarding is effective.

School details

Unique reference number	131617
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10041990

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	445
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jill Summers
Headteacher	Alexander Banks
Telephone number	020 8455 9572
Website	www.wessexgardens.co.uk
Email address	office@wessexgardens.barnet.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	22–23 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils come from a very wide range of backgrounds.
- The proportion of White British pupils is very small and well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is well above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average. An average proportion of pupils are in receipt of an education, health

and care plan.

- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well above average.
- The mobility of pupils is well above average. Many more pupils than is usual nationally join or leave the school throughout the school year.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum standards expected nationally for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed teaching and learning across the school in all year groups, including the early years. Nearly all of these were joint observations of learning with either the headteacher, deputy headteacher or the assistant headteacher.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' books and spoke to pupils about their learning.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils in classrooms and outdoors, and held meetings with pupils in key stages 1 and 2 to hear their views about the school. The inspectors listened to Year 1 and Year 2 pupils read and discussed their reading with them.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour during lessons, at breaktime and at lunchtime.
- The inspectors met a range of staff, including the headteacher, senior leaders and subject leaders and evaluated all aspects of the school's work.
- The inspectors met with seven members of the governing body, including the chair of the governing body.
- A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors checked the single central register of pre-employment checks on staff, and looked at pupils' records on behaviour records and attendance. They examined documents, including school improvement plans, and policies in relation to safeguarding and child protection, and discussed safety issues with staff and pupils.
- The inspectors considered a range of information about the school. This included information on pupils' attainment and progress and information published on the school's website.
- Inspectors considered the 47 responses to Parent View, Ofsted's online questionnaire, and the 40 free-text responses from parents. The inspectors spoke with some parents as they dropped off their children at the start of the school day. The inspectors also considered the 39 responses from staff to a school questionnaire.

Inspection team

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John Paddick	Ofsted Inspector
Lando Du Plooy	Ofsted Inspector

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