

Inspection of a good school: Wessex Primary School

St Adrian's Close, Cox Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 3AT

Inspection dates:

25–26 February 2020

Outcome

Wessex Primary School continues to be a good school.

However, the inspector has some concerns that one or more areas may be declining, as set out below.

What is it like to attend this school?

From the second you step into Wessex Primary, it is clear that this is a school where leaders captivate pupils so that they love learning. Leaders have created a culture where pupils take pride in their work. Adults have high expectations of pupils' behaviour. They make sure that there is an inclusive and respectful ethos. Pupils work well together and listen to each other with patience. They try their best in lessons. Pupils feel safe in school. They say that bullying is rare. When it happens, teachers put a stop to it.

Pupils enjoy many aspects of school life, such as the daily mile, art and writing articles for the 'Wessex Gazette'. They are especially fond of Lily and Poppy, the school goats. Pupils learn to care for them well. Pupils have many opportunities to take part in educational trips. For example, all pupils from Year 1 to Year 5 visited a castle last term, bringing the 'secret quest' topic to life.

Leaders have successfully created an interesting curriculum. Pupils learn well in a range of subjects. However, leaders have not prioritised the teaching of reading, so some pupils do not learn to read well enough.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders have redesigned how pupils learn at Wessex, introducing a new approach in September 2019. Pupils now experience a rich, broad curriculum through themed topics. It is clear to see pupils' enthusiasm and interest in what they are learning. Parents and carers are positive about the changes to what and how their children learn. As one parent wrote: 'The new curriculum has had a positive impact on the attitudes to learning and behaviour. There is a buzz of excitement at the school.' Teachers make sure that pupils remember what they have learned. This strengthens pupils' understanding. They apply their learning well, making links between subjects. For example, in Year 6, pupils were discussing the climate in Antarctica. They discussed what they already knew about the tilt

of the Earth's axis to explain months of darkness. Nevertheless, the design of the curriculum is new. Leaders need to finish sequencing knowledge and skills in a wide range of subjects, including reading.

Leaders have not thought carefully enough about how pupils' reading skills develop over time. Phonics is not taught well enough in the early years and key stage 1. Some staff do not have the subject knowledge to teach phonics well. Too few pupils have a precise understanding of the sounds that letters make. They are not acquiring skills quickly enough to become confident and fluent readers. There are gaps in pupils' comprehension skills. Leaders have plans in place to improve the teaching of reading but these are not being implemented with enough urgency.

Nonetheless, pupils love reading. They talk confidently about books they have read and enjoyed. Leaders ensure that teachers use engaging texts in lessons to support pupils' understanding of other subjects.

Leaders have been more successful in improving how pupils develop their writing. Teachers are very clear about what skills they need to teach and when. Pupils enjoy writing and present their work well. However, some staff's knowledge of phonics hinders how well they teach the pupils to spell.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), including deaf pupils from the resource base, study a full curriculum. They are well supported during lessons because adults know how to spot misconceptions well. Pupils with SEND are encouraged to develop their independence through carefully adapted work.

Leaders are determined that pupils know how parts of the brain affect their behaviour and learning. This knowledge helps pupils to reflect on their reactions. They are encouraged to be active citizens, caring for others and the environment. For example, pupils organised a non-uniform day to raise money for those affected by the Australian bushfires.

Leaders have introduced new ways of helping staff manage pupils' behaviour. Staff use these approaches consistently. Most pupils have a positive attitude to learning. Behaviour in lessons reflects this. Children in the early years take turns and share resources well.

Leaders have not ensured that all pupils attend school often enough. Disadvantaged pupils do not attend school as regularly as their peers.

Senior leaders and governors consider the well-being of staff effectively. They are acutely aware of the extra workload that developing the new curriculum has brought. Staff appreciate the additional support that has been put in place for them.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Safeguarding is a high priority for leaders, staff and governors. Staff are vigilant. As one parent wrote: 'They do everything to help the children feel safe, secure and happy in their environment.'

Staff receive regular training. They know how to spot any signs of potential abuse. The designated safeguarding leader communicates her expectations well. Staff know what to do if they have a concern about a child. Safeguarding records are thorough and any necessary actions are immediate. Pre-employment checks are complete.

Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe, including while using the internet.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have not ensured that phonics is taught well or that pupils' skills in reading are systematically developed as they move through the school. This means that too few pupils are developing the key skills they need in order to read fluently and for sense. Leaders need to ensure, as a matter of priority, that there is a consistent and effective approach to teaching pupils to read and that staff have the subject knowledge and expertise to teach phonics and reading well.
- Leaders have recently set about redesigning the curriculum, including for early years, but this task is not yet finished. Learning in science and the foundation subjects has not been fully sequenced. This means that teachers do not know clearly what pupils should learn at each stage. Leaders need to continue their work to ensure that curriculum plans are fully developed and implemented well so that pupils make strong progress over time in all subjects.
- Absence for pupils in receipt of free school meals was in the highest 20% of schools in 2019. Leaders have begun to tighten up the procedures they have in place to improve attendance. Too many of these pupils still do not attend school regularly enough. This has a negative impact on their learning. There is more for leaders to do to ensure that all pupils attend school regularly.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or non-exempt outstanding school. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find some evidence that standards may be declining, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious

concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will convert the section 8 inspection to a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good on 10–11 May 2016.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you are the school and you are not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	109821
Local authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	10111380
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	441
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Liz Herod
Headteacher	Simon Woodbridge
Website	www.wessexprimary.org
Date of previous inspection	10–11 May 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up his post in January 2017.
- There is a part-time nursery which has places for 30 children.
- There is a specially resourced unit for moderately deaf pupils which currently caters for 12 pupils aged three to 11.
- The school has a breakfast club operating on the site, managed by the school.

Information about this inspection

- As part of this inspection, I held meetings with the headteacher, the deputy headteachers and the special educational needs coordinator. I also held discussions with teachers and support staff.
- I did deep dives in reading, writing and science. These subjects were considered closely to evaluate the quality of education. This involved speaking to subject leaders, teachers and pupils. I visited lessons and looked at a range of pupils' work and leaders' planning, as well as hearing some pupils read.

- I met with the chair of the governing body and four other governors. I met with two representatives from the local authority.
- I considered a range of school documentation, including the school's own evaluation and improvement planning. I scrutinised published information about pupils' achievement and looked at the school's website.
- To inspect safeguarding, I met with the school's designated safeguarding leaders, spoke to staff, governors and pupils, checked recruitment procedures and looked at safeguarding records and policies.
- I considered the 91 responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire, including 47 free-text comments. In addition, I considered 50 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for staff and 146 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Lea Hannam, lead inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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