

Inspection of a good school: The Winchcombe School

Maple Crescent, Shaw, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 1LN

Inspection dates:

16 and 17 November 2021

Outcome

The Winchcombe School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

Leaders and staff are determined for every pupil to achieve well. Teachers explain new learning clearly and then check that pupils understand. Pupils of all ages listen intently and approach their work with a positive attitude. Consequently, they enjoy learning and work hard. Pupils talked confidently and proudly about their achievements, especially in art.

Staff use a simple ladder system to help pupils understand what behaviour is expected. This supports most pupils to make sensible choices. This has helped reduce incidents of poor behaviour so that pupils behave well. Pupils said that bullying does happen, but that staff sort out issues swiftly.

Pupils feel safe in this school, and said that they are treated fairly. They understand how to keep themselves safe online, and about stranger danger and road safety. Younger pupils learn to manage risk safely, for example when climbing on play equipment.

Pupils relish the range of opportunities available. They take leadership roles seriously, such as being a librarian or school councillor. Pupils enjoy visiting the local area, including Donnington Castle. Year 6 pupils loved kayaking and abseiling on their residential trip.

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

Staff help pupils to develop a love of reading. Pupils enjoy teachers reading books aloud in all classes. Staff skilfully teach new words from books to broaden pupils' vocabulary. In Nursery, children learn and listen to rhymes, to help get them ready to hear the sounds that letters make when they move into Reception. Staff closely follow the school's phonic scheme to teach early reading. Some pupils in Year 2 are not yet reading as well as leaders expect, because of the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Pupils read books that are usually well matched to the sounds they have learned. Struggling readers have extra support to help them catch up, but the most expert staff do not always work with these pupils.

Staff help pupils to learn appropriate knowledge and calculation methods in mathematics. This is particularly effective in the early years, where teachers support children to be confident with number. Staff guide older pupils to use their knowledge when solving problems. They are challenged to verbally explain their thinking.

Leaders have ensured that plans in other subjects are ambitious and well sequenced. Subject leaders have set out the broad knowledge and skills they want pupils to learn. They have not yet refined what is the most important content for pupils to remember, to further help them build on prior learning. Pupils' high-quality work reflects teachers' ambitions, especially in art. Year 1 pupils evaluate different artists' portraits before making their own portrait collage. Year 3 pupils use sketches of shells and fossils to make their own motifs. They print these to make their own wallpaper inspired by the work of William Morris.

Subject leaders have checked that plans are being closely followed by teachers. Some subject leaders are new and do not have the skills to check that pupils have learned and remembered the essential knowledge and skills. Consequently, leaders do not always have a clear view of how well pupils are achieving in all subjects.

The special education needs coordinator is ambitious for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. She uses external training and her expert knowledge to support staff to identify and provide for pupils in different subjects. Teachers provide appropriate support, such as different resources or additional adult explanations. Consequently, these pupils achieve well.

Staff in the speech and language resource support pupils well to achieve their targets. These pupils also learn skills to increase their independence, such as how to safely make toast. They are supported effectively by staff to develop friendships in the mainstream classes.

Nursery children quickly learn the class routines, including how to take turns, for example when choosing musical instruments. Staff help older pupils to follow the clear school rules. They deal with any low-level disruption effectively and positively. This ensures that in lessons, pupils can focus on their learning.

Leaders encourage pupils to be respectful and inclusive of others. One pupil commented, 'Everyone is friendly and everyone is treated the same, whoever you are.' Pupils enjoy choosing books from the library that reflect the diversity in the school community. Assemblies promote celebrations from different cultures and religions.

Governors and leaders carefully review staff workload, including the marking of pupils' work. As a result, staff feel valued and listened to. Governors do not, however, sufficiently challenge leaders about how well pupils are learning in subjects other than maths and English.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

The safeguarding team members, including family support workers, work well together to appropriately identify and support pupils and families who need help. They work well with external agencies.

Staff know their responsibilities, what signs to be alert to, and how to report concerns. They have a strong understanding of the possible additional vulnerabilities of pupils who attend the speech and language resource base. Safeguarding records are comprehensive.

Minor weaknesses were identified in safeguarding during the inspection. Leaders and governors acknowledged these, and began to address the issues immediately. These weaknesses do not leave children at risk.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have broadly identified the key content that pupils will learn in each subject. However, this is not precise enough to ensure that staff can build on pupils' prior learning. Subject leaders should refine what essential knowledge and skills they want all pupils to learn and remember in all subjects, from the early years onwards. Leaders have already taken action to address this weakness over the coming year. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied.
- Leaders of subjects other than mathematics and English have checked that teachers are closely following plans, but have not monitored how well pupils are learning. All subject leaders should be equipped with the skills to check that pupils are learning and remembering the most important knowledge and skills.

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 outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, 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 deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the second section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2011.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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

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| Unique reference number | 135079 |
| Local authority | West Berkshire |
| Inspection number | 10200341 |
| 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 | 468 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair of governing body | Rachel Redgwell |
| Headteacher | Neil Pilsworth |
| Website | www.winchcombe.w-berks.sch.uk |
| Date of previous inspection | 9 November 2016, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 |

Information about this school

- This school has a speech and language resource provision for 12 pupils.
- West Berkshire runs a Year 5 language and literacy resource base at the school. Pupils attend from different schools in the area for a weekly session in small groups.
- The headteacher started in his role in September 2019.
- The chair of governors started in her role in November 2019. Almost all other governors have also joined since the previous inspection.
- The governing body manages before- and after-school childcare provision on site.
- The school does not currently use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation
- The inspector met with the headteachers, other leaders and other school staff.

- She also met with two governors, including the chair of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, science, and art and design. For each deep dive, she met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to the curriculum leaders about other subjects.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspector spoke with staff and pupils. She met with the designated safeguarding leads to review their knowledge, records and actions, and also reviewed information about the safer recruitment of staff.
- To review wider judgements, the inspector spoke to staff and groups of pupils, and observed behaviour in classrooms and at lunchtime.
- The views of staff, including 33 responses to Ofsted's online staff survey, were considered.
- The 55 responses to Ofsted Parent View, including 54 written responses, were also taken into account.

Inspection team

Laurie Anderson, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
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