

# Water Hall Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	110322
<b>Local Authority</b>	Milton Keynes
<b>Inspection number</b>	288632
<b>Inspection dates</b>	25–26 April 2007
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Steven Hill

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

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School	275
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Ms Kate Bennett
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr Anthony Draper
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 July 2002
<b>School address</b>	Melfort Drive Bletchley Milton Keynes MK2 3QD
<b>Telephone number</b>	01908 377833
<b>Fax number</b>	01908 370251

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

Until 2005, Water Hall was a combined school, taking pupils up to age 12. It is now an average-sized primary school which serves an area on the edge of Milton Keynes. Pupils' social and economic circumstances are much less favourable than those found generally. The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, with about 15% from a variety of other ethnic groups. About a tenth of pupils have a mother tongue other than English, but just a few are at the early stages of learning English. There is a high mobility of pupils in the school. A high proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and disabilities, particularly moderate learning difficulties or social and behavioural problems. The attainment of children on entry to the Foundation Stage is well below that normally found. There has been a huge turnover of teaching staff in the last two or three years. The local authority has acknowledged that the building is of a poor standard, and a new school is being built.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 3

The school provides a satisfactory standard of education, following significant improvements in the last year. Pupils are making satisfactory progress because teaching is satisfactory, with an increasing proportion of good lessons. Their personal development and well-being are satisfactory. Pupils like school and have positive attitudes to each other and to learning.

After the last inspection, standards fell and, for several years, pupils did not make enough progress, particularly at Key Stage 2. In the Foundation Stage, hard work by the leadership team has led to steady improvements in teaching and the curriculum and standards have risen year on year. These children now make good progress, and the group who moved into Year 1 in 2006 achieved standards close to those expected for their age.

Improvements elsewhere have been slower, exacerbated by a very high turnover of staff, and weaknesses in teaching and the use of assessment. Although standards by the end of Year 2 have been below average for several years, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the light of their starting points. Standards by the end of Year 6 have been well below average until last year, representing unsatisfactory achievement during Key Stage 2. Standards have improved this year, although they are still below average in Year 6. Achievement is now satisfactory throughout the school because teaching is more consistent and good use is made of assessment to support pupils' learning.

Some inconsistencies remain in teaching, often relating to the relative lack of experience of some staff. Teachers sometimes spend too much time dealing with pupils who find it hard to conform to good standards of behaviour, so the pace of lessons slows. Behaviour in many lessons is good, and most pupils behave well around the school. However, behaviour is only satisfactory overall because of the small minority of pupils who still sometimes cause problems. Some teachers make good use of opportunities to develop pupils' learning by getting them to talk through their ideas together, but this is not done frequently or consistently enough.

Care, guidance and support for pupils are good. A high emphasis on pastoral care is matched by very careful tracking of individuals' academic progress, and a wide range of provision to address their needs. These have been major factors in pupils' improved achievement. The curriculum is satisfactory. There is a good and effective emphasis on pupils' personal development and their individual needs. Good attention is given to literacy and numeracy. However, provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is inadequate. There are not enough suitable computers for pupils to use, and full use is not made of those that are available.

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Good leadership from the headteacher and his two deputies has strongly supported the improvements made recently. In particular, careful monitoring of teaching and of standards, and rigorous action to address any problems identified, have supported the improvements to teaching, and the consequent improvements in achievement. However, many teachers with responsibilities for different subjects are new to their roles. Most have had little opportunity to monitor provision and outcomes systematically, or to make a major contribution to the subjects' development.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory but which have areas of underperformance will receive a monitoring visit before their next section 5 inspection.

## What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards, particularly by giving pupils more systematic and frequent opportunities to develop and use their speaking and listening skills in different subjects.
- Improve the provision for ICT, and make more use of the existing equipment to develop pupils' skills.
- Make teaching more consistent, particularly by ensuring that weaknesses in some pupils' behaviour are not allowed to disrupt lessons.
- Increase the role of all subject leaders in monitoring and improving standards and provision.

## Achievement and standards

### Grade: 3

Standards are below average, but in the light of pupils' low attainment on entry they achieve satisfactorily. Standards have gone up throughout the school recently. Results of national assessments at the end of Year 2 rose in 2006, although they remained below average. Results of national assessments for pupils in Year 6 were well below average for several years, showing inadequate progress from Year 2. Improvements in teaching and in levels of support to individuals have contributed to a significant turn round in the last year. Pupils are making satisfactory progress at Key Stage 2, and standards are rising. Standards are still below average in Year 6. These pupils have made great strides in their achievement during the last year, but this has not been enough to fully overcome the shortfall from previous years. Pupils with a mother tongue other than English learn the language quickly. They make the same progress across the curriculum as their classmates. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

### Grade: 3

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy school and have good attitudes to work. Behaviour is improving because of the support in place to deal with the challenging behaviour of individuals. Pupils' enjoy physical education lessons and can explain the benefits of exercise and healthy eating. However, they do not always choose the healthy options at lunchtimes. Pupils say they feel safe because they are 'taught about how to deal with danger'. They make a worthwhile contribution to their school through the school council. Members have contributed ideas for the design of the new school and have obtained play equipment for break and lunchtimes. Although pupils' standards in literacy, numeracy and ICT are below average they acquire satisfactory life-skills due to the good support and advice they receive from teachers, teaching assistants, learning mentors and an NSPCC support worker. Attendance has improved but is still below average.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 3

Teaching and learning have improved in the last year. The proportion of unsatisfactory lessons is much reduced, and more lessons are good. Teachers have good relationships with pupils who respond well and are keen to learn. Most lessons are orderly, because of clear expectations, although occasionally too much time is spent dealing with the unacceptable behaviour of a

minority. Teachers are increasingly effective at matching tasks to pupils' different needs. Good use is made of skilled teaching assistants to support pupils who have particular difficulties. Pupils particularly enjoy practical work, and pupils in Year 6 said they would like to do more experiments in science. Learning is greatly enhanced when pupils talk through their ideas in pairs. This practice contributes significantly to pupils' understanding and confidence, and to their speaking and listening skills. However, teachers frequently miss opportunities to use this strategy.

## **Curriculum and other activities**

### **Grade: 3**

Provision for personal, social and health education is good because it permeates all aspects of school life. The curriculum is good in the Foundation Stage with a range of activities that cover all the areas of learning. Teachers plan and liaise effectively to ensure children transfer smoothly to Year 1. In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum is satisfactory. The strong emphasis placed on literacy and numeracy reflects the school's drive to raise standards. Pupils are fully included in all activities. There is an adequate range of clubs and activities that extend learning, including visits, visitors and a residential trip to the Caldecotte Project. Pupils benefit most when teachers plan practical and creative activities but this approach is inconsistent across the school. Not enough use is made of investigative and problem solving activities or links between subjects to make learning more exciting and fun. Provision in ICT is weak.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 2**

Staff work very closely with a range of professionals and external agencies to ensure pupils' safety and well-being. Learning mentors and other support staff work successfully with teachers to make sure that pupils are 'ready to learn'. Inspectors agree with the mostly positive views of parents who welcome the school's support for their children. Vulnerable children are looked after very well, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities. Pupils new to English are helped to integrate well into school and to make good progress in their speech and language. The many pupils who join the school after Year 1 receive good help so they settle in quickly. Arrangements for safeguarding learners are strong. Pupils' personal and academic development is monitored well so that their needs are addressed. There is thorough tracking of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with appropriate intervention for those who are falling behind. The 'Kaleidoscope Programme' and lessons in personal, social and health education support pupils' personal and emotional development very well. Pupils value this, saying, 'Learning mentors play games with us to help us feel better'. Older pupils appreciate how they are guided in making safe and healthy lifestyle choices through the 'Growing Up Stuff' programme.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 3**

Strong leadership from the headteacher and deputies has led to significant improvement in the last year. Improvement since the last inspection had been inadequate, but the school is now satisfactorily placed to improve further.

Self-evaluation is good. Rigorous monitoring of teaching and planning by senior staff and clear feedback to colleagues have improved quality. Good support, from within the school and from the local authority, has helped staff improve their practice. Difficult decisions have been taken and staff have been imaginatively deployed to maximise their impact. Thorough analysis of pupils' progress has led to positive changes in practice and the curriculum, and improved standards. The school's strong systems to support pupils pastorally underpin all its work. Considerable work has gone on to involve parents more in their children's education, although this has had mixed success.

Subject leaders have a clear brief in supporting progress, but many are new to the job and have had little chance to put it fully into practice, except in English and mathematics. The governing body has a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is keen to provide support.

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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

<i>Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate</i>	<b>School Overall</b>
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### Overall effectiveness

<b>How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?</b>	3
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No

### Achievement and standards

<b>How well do learners achieve?</b>	3
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	3

### Personal development and well-being

<b>How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	3
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The behaviour of learners	3
The attendance of learners	3
How well learners enjoy their education	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	3
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	3
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3

### The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?</b>	3
<b>How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?</b>	3
<b>How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?</b>	2

<sup>1</sup> Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Annex A

**Leadership and management**

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	3
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

## Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

4 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Water Hall Primary School, Melfort Drive, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3QD

Thank you for your help when we came to your school. We enjoyed talking to you and seeing you working in lessons. You told us you liked school and we could see that you do.

We found that Water Hall has improved a lot recently and is providing a satisfactory education for you all. We were particularly impressed by how carefully all the adults keep an eye on how you are doing, and help you if you have any difficulties. They work hard to make sure you are safe and happy in school. Children who start off in the Foundation Stage do well and soon settle into school. The rest of you are making sound progress in learning in most subjects, but you do not do so well in ICT because of the lack of equipment. We have agreed with your teachers that they are going to improve this.

We liked the way that you all get on well with each other and with the adults. Most of you behave well and work hard in lessons, but sometimes a few children are silly and this can stop you learning. We would like you to work with your teachers by always trying to be sensible, so this does not happen in future. We could see that you learn a lot when teachers get you to talk over your ideas together, and we have asked them to do this more often, so you can learn even more.

Mr Draper and the deputies are good at organising the school, and work hard to make things better, but we think there is too much for them to do on their own. We have suggested that teachers who are in charge of different subjects have more chances to help them organise things and check how everything is going.

We are sure that you will carry on enjoying school, and that you will help your teachers to make things better by always being sensible and working hard. We hope you like your brand new school when it is finished.

Best wishes,

Steven HillLead inspector