

Wessex Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109821
Local Authority	Windsor and Maidenhead
Inspection number	310110
Inspection dates	18–19 March 2008
Reporting inspector	Hugh Protherough

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	439
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr L Armstrong
Headteacher	Mrs V Preece
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	St Adrian's Close Cox Green Maidenhead SL6 3AT
Telephone number	01628 626 724
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Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The school was created in September 2006 following the amalgamation of the neighbouring infant and junior schools. The vast majority of pupils are of White British background, but about one in ten speak a language other than English at home. A unit for children with hearing impairment supports thirteen pupils within the school. All have statements of special educational needs (SEN). The proportion of pupils with other learning difficulties and disabilities is below the national average. The proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is below average.

The school has gained number of significant awards. These include: Activemark Gold Award, Artsmark Silver Award, National Healthy School Gold Award, Bronze Eco Schools Award. The school was revalidated for Investors in People in December 2007.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Headteacher, staff and governors have responded positively and successfully to the challenge of the recent amalgamation. As a result of their collective efforts and the increasingly effective teamwork of the staff, the school provides a good quality of education and is well placed to improve further.

Children entering the Nursery arrive with levels of knowledge and skills broadly in line with those expected of three-year-olds nationally. They make very good progress because of some excellent provision, especially in relation to their social development. By the end of the Reception year the proportion achieving the national goals for five-year-olds is above average. Taken overall pupils in Years 1 to 6 are achieving well, though progress is currently brisker in the older classes. By the end of Year 6 standards are above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with hearing impairment achieve well and make good progress in relation their targets.

Inspectors agree with the parent who wrote: 'All the teachers, helpers and office staff seem to have the children's welfare at the forefront of their mind.' Pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding because the headteacher and staff team place heavy emphasis on ensuring that children are safe, secure and happy. Clear rules and high expectations are successfully communicated to children of all ages, so that by the time they are ready to leave school many are playing an active role in supporting the school's excellent ethos and behaviour by working as peer mentors.

Teachers plan thoroughly and the content of lessons is often carefully structured to engage and motivate the pupils. The improved system for teaching the sounds of letters (phonics) has been a significant feature in narrowing the gap between pupils' performance in English and mathematics. The results of boys, in particular, are showing good improvement. Teachers mark the children's work regularly and often provide encouraging comments. However, marking is not always consistent and does not always tell pupils how they can improve their work.

The school has started to think of ways to enhance pupils' learning by introducing themed events such as 'Mini-enterprise week' and 'Eco week'. Teachers are also beginning to find ways for pupils to use their literacy and computer skills in other subjects. This motivates them and has a positive impact upon achievement. However, the plans necessary to create more systematic approaches to this type of work are at an early stage of development.

The headteacher is passionate in her promotion of the school and its staff. As a result the staff team feel valued and work together well. Subject and phase leaders are working closely in developing a clearer view of both the quality of education provided and the achievements of the pupils. The school is developing new approaches to tracking pupils' progress. However, assessment data are not always put to effective use by teachers and subject leaders to ensure that children make the very best progress they can.

The vast majority of parents and other stakeholders understandably hold the school in high regard. The governing body has good oversight of their responsibilities. They play a full part in supporting developments such as the new building project as well as maintaining a keen focus on both the quality of education and the results pupils achieve.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Three to five year-olds-benefit from an excellent start to their education. Arrangements for joining Nursery are thorough and ensure that adults and children swiftly get to know each other. Children of all abilities gain rapidly in confidence because adults carefully support them in making choices from the wide variety of exciting activities provided. Clear routines, rules and consistently high expectations from all the staff ensure the children make rapid progress in their learning. Social development is particularly good because activities in both indoor and outdoor environments ensure that the children swiftly get used to sharing and negotiation. Children's progress is tracked and recorded assiduously. There is excellent focus on improving communication, language and literacy so that children learn to derive pleasure from books and stories as well as making a secure start in phonics.

Close links between Nursery and the Reception leaders ensure that the benefits of the children's Nursery experiences are further extended. The children relish being in school and enjoy positive relationships with the staff. Learning is enhanced through well-chosen themes that enable children to develop their knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. By the time they leave Reception almost all are working within the national learning goals expected of five-year-olds and a significant minority exceed them. The impact of the school's approach to teaching phonics is increasingly evident in the improvements in childrens' reading and early writing.

What the school should do to improve further

- Consolidate the use of test and assessment data to track the progress of pupils (and groups of pupils) and to adapt provision to meet their needs.
- Develop greater consistency in approaches to marking and ensure that pupils know how to improve their work.
- Enhance pupils' learning and achievement by further developing agreed approaches to linking the subjects of the National Curriculum.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

The Year 6 pupils taking the national tests in 2007 made excellent progress in relation to the results they achieved at age seven. Standards were above the national average, with pupils achieving particularly well in mathematics and science. The work of the current Year 6 shows that they have made very good progress since September and are on course to achieve the ambitious targets set for them by the staff. Their overall progress from the time they took the Year 2 tests is good. The teachers' assessments of seven-year-olds in 2007 were significantly better than the national picture in reading, writing and mathematics. Inspectors' assessments of the work of the current Year 2 indicate that standards are not as high this year, but that pupils are making steady progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Inspectors agree with the parents who commented on the way that the school produces 'well-rounded individuals'. Pupils flourish in the secure and supportive environment and make the most of what the school offers. Relationships between staff and children are cordial and

pupils are very appreciative of the way adults respond to any concerns that they raise. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent and attitudes to learning unswervingly positive. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility through, for example, the school council and are involved in helping younger pupils by writing information booklets. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to lead safe, healthy lives and know the importance of good diet and exercise. In this respect, staff set a good example by undertaking after school keep fit classes in the school hall. The pupils' above average attendance, good progress in basic skills and activities such as 'Enterprise Week' mean that they are well prepared for their future economic well-being.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching builds successfully on the pupils' excellent behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the teachers' well-planned lessons and the broad range of interesting activities provided. Teachers' imaginative use of interactive white boards frequently enhances learning. Some outstanding teaching was seen in the Year 5 and 6 classes where the impact of teachers' high expectations, strong subject knowledge and skilled questioning are evident in the focussed hard work of the pupils and the quality of their oral and written responses. Throughout the school the use of teaching assistants adds considerably to the quality of education. This is particularly the case for the hearing-impaired pupils where the well-judged support of additional adults enables the children to play a full part in lessons and make good progress in their learning.

Whilst work in English and mathematics is generally well matched to the individual abilities of the pupils, this is not always the case in other subjects. For instance, inspectors' analysis of the Year 2 topic books revealed both higher and lower attainers are sometimes using the same worksheets. The pupils' work is regularly marked and all teachers are careful to provide pupils with encouraging feedback. Some teachers provide incisive feedback to pupils about how they can improve their work, but this practice is not yet embedded throughout the school.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The school offers a broad and balanced curriculum. There is a strong and appropriate focus on developing the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Whilst interactive white boards in every classroom frequently enhance lessons in many subjects, the development of a dedicated computer suite limits the extent to which pupils can employ this technology in their day-to-day learning. An increasing number of exciting events enrich and broaden the curriculum. When these occur it is evident from the pupils' responses that the informal links made between subjects add depth and meaning to their learning. However, this good practice has yet to be developed into a coherent plan that will ensure consistent approaches across the school.

A major strength of the school's provision lies in the excellent range of extra-curricular clubs and activities offered before, during and after school each day. There is enthusiastic take up by the pupils who benefit considerably from the many sporting and cultural activities provided by staff, parents and other local organisations.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The school provides excellent levels of care and support for its pupils. Arrangements for safeguarding pupils comply fully with requirements and all staff are trained and alert to child protection matters. The school is assiduous in recording any incidents of oppressive or anti-social behaviour. Inspectors' conversations with pupils confirm that they feel safe and are confident that, if they approach members of staff, they will be listened to and supported. Many spoke positively about the way that peer mediation is helping them to resolve their own disagreements and difficulties without recourse to an adult. The school has strong and effective links with a range of external agencies, for instance in the support of pupils with hearing impairment.

The school is developing new systems for tracking pupil progress. Ambitious targets for the current Year 6 appear well-founded. However, the use of test and assessment data to track formally the performance of year groups and other groups of pupils is not yet firmly established. The exception to this is the tracking of pupils with special educational needs where support is well managed and adjusted promptly in response to assessment information.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Under the determined leadership of the headteacher and with the strong support and team-work of the staff, the new primary school is developing its own distinctive ethos and vision. The school development plan is the product of secure evaluation. The priorities are the right ones and set a clear direction for future improvement.

Leadership responsibilities are delegated appropriately throughout the staff. The decision to create subject leadership teams involving staff with experience of different age ranges has had a positive impact. These teams are developing a secure understanding of how their subject is taught across the school. They are building a good picture of standards and pupils' achievements through checking pupils' books and an initial analysis of data provided by the new assessment tracking system.

The governors are enthusiastic and committed. They have a keen appreciation of the work of the school and, with their wide-ranging skills and contacts, provide valuable support for important developments such as the new building project.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	NA
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	2

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

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

¹ 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

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	2
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	2
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

01 April 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wessex Primary School, Maidenhead, SL6 3AT

Thank you very much for your friendly welcome when my colleagues and I recently visited your school. We enjoyed our time at Wessex and were particularly pleased that you wanted to share your views with the inspectors.

We agree with you that Wessex is a good school. You work hard and your behaviour in lessons and around the school is outstanding. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes get an excellent start to their time in school. The positive attitudes you all display to work and learning as you get older began here. Your teachers take excellent care of you and often make lessons interesting and fun. As a result you make good progress. We were particularly pleased to see that you are learning your phonics and noticed that your results in reading and writing are improving, especially the boys!

The school council does a good job in sharing your views with the staff and we like the way that peer mentors are helping you all to get on well with each other. You have an excellent variety of clubs and activities to choose from each week. We were pleased to see so many of you getting involved and making choices that will help you stay fit and healthy.

There are three things we have asked the teachers to do to make Wessex even better.

- Always tell you how you can improve your work. (You can help with this by listening to what the teachers say about your work and making sure you correct your work when they mark it.)
- Develop more projects such as 'Enterprise Week' to make your learning even more exciting than it already is.
- Keep track of your progress to make sure that work set in lessons helps you learn as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

Hugh Protherough

Lead Inspector