

Water Hall Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110322
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337468
Inspection dates	12–13 November 2009
Reporting inspector	Ruth Westbrook

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

Type of school	Nursery
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	285
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elliot Sharp
Headteacher	Anthony Draper
Date of previous school inspection	5 April 2009
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 19 lessons and held meetings with governors, staff and groups of pupils. They observed the school's work and looked at the school's development plan, key policy documents, assessment information, governors' minutes and samples of pupils' work. Safeguarding procedures were also checked. In addition, 12 parent questionnaires were analysed, along with questionnaires from staff and pupils in Key Stage 2.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- whether all groups of pupils achieve as well as they can, particularly those who do not receive additional support and those who arrive after the start of the school year
- how well teachers use assessment information to plan for the different needs of pupils within their classes
- how effectively school leaders at all levels are implementing plans to raise attainment.

Information about the school

This average-sized primary school moved into a new building in October 2008. Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage into the Nursery class. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well above average. Most pupils come from White British families, with about one fifth from a variety of other minority ethnic groups. A few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. Almost one third of pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Their needs mainly relate to moderate learning difficulties, speech, language and communication difficulties or behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. About a quarter of pupils joins or leaves the school at times other than the usual dates for admission

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

3

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

3

Main findings

This is a satisfactory school that has experienced a considerable amount of upheaval in recent years from which it has come through well. Since the last inspection, the school has been demolished, rebuilt and moved into new buildings. The impact of this affected pupils' achievement in 2008. Attainment in English and mathematics, which had started to rise in 2007, fell again. The school's leadership provided much stability during this period and, with the support of the local authority, has used this change effectively to re-focus the school's direction. In 2009, the provisional national test results for Year 6 show that attainment in English and mathematics has returned to broadly average levels.

Four key strengths help to make this a happy school where pupils achieve satisfactorily.

- The stimulating environment which is clean, spacious and welcoming promotes a calm atmosphere. The pupils value their surroundings very much and in talking about it show how some areas, like the courtyard, are seen as 'special'.
- The good quality of care and support provided by all staff helps all pupils including those who might otherwise be vulnerable achieve as well as others.
- Relationships between adults and pupils are good and help pupils feel secure in a safe environment. They trust adults to help them if they need it and have a good understanding of how to keep safe.
- Senior leaders meet with class teachers regularly to track pupils' progress carefully. As a result, underachievement is identified quickly and additional support is put in place

Because of sound processes for evaluation, leaders have a clear overview of what needs to be done to bring about further improvement and adequate plans are in place to achieve this. Improvements so far, for example in standards in English and mathematics at Key Stage 2, indicate that the school has satisfactory capacity to improve further. Leaders recognise that a few areas, identified by the inspection, are insufficiently developed. For example, the school's checking of its work has not been sufficiently sharp to enable precise identification of areas for improvement in development plans. The result is that the quality of teaching has a number of inconsistencies, for example in the thoroughness of lesson planning, in the effective use of assessment information and in the variability of the feedback to pupils on their work. Not enough has been done to emphasise the use of reading and writing skills in subjects throughout the school, particularly by pupils of middle and high ability.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

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- Increase the capacity of school leaders to make improvements by:
 - equipping them with the skills and opportunities necessary to monitor and evaluate the quality of learning in lessons and then to plan improvements by identifying more carefully the individual development needs of staff
 - sharpening up the school development plan so that priorities are clearer and success criteria are measurable.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and use of assessment by:
 - making sure that all teachers use assessment information to plan the next steps of pupils' learning
 - improve the use of marking and feedback so that all pupils know how to improve their work.
- Raise attainment in reading and writing by:
 - ensuring a greater range of opportunities for pupils of all ages to use reading and writing skills in literacy lessons and in other subjects
 - provide greater challenges for the middle ability and able pupils to develop their reading and writing skills.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**3**

Pupils make satisfactory progress from their starting points in the Early Years Foundation Stage, which are broadly typical of children entering Nursery. By the end of Year 6, pupils' attainment is broadly average in English and mathematics, but is below average in science. Pupils' progress is uneven across the school. It is good in the last two years of Key Stage 2, but many pupils are catching up because of slower progress in earlier years. In some classes, pupils of middle and higher ability make less progress than they might because the work is the same for all members of the class. In a lesson seen on alphabetical order, the learning was broken down appropriately into small steps to meet the needs of less able pupils and this was reinforced by repetition. However, the work for middle and higher ability pupils was the same, limiting the amount of progress they made. The progress of a small minority of pupils is affected because their families move frequently. The school's support for this group on arrival and whilst in the school helps them to settle well and make satisfactory progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective additional support which helps them to make satisfactory and, in some cases, good progress. The few pupils who are at an early stage of learning English make satisfactory progress. They benefit from the emphasis on speaking and the use of 'talking partners'.

The quality of pupils' learning is satisfactory, but it varies from class to class. When lessons are planned to meet the needs of all abilities in the group and pupils are actively involved in a range of activities, pupils show good levels of enthusiasm and make accelerated progress. This was seen in a Years 4 and 5 mixed-aged class where pupils were measuring time in seconds. The mental mathematics starter was brisk and engaging and pupils made good progress in their subsequent practical activities.

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Sometimes, pupils make slow progress in the starter sessions, becoming restless and bored, because the needs of the full range of abilities and ages in the group are not met and the teacher talks for too long.

Pupils' understanding of how to be healthy is satisfactory. Pupils take part enthusiastically in activities at break times, such as using the trim trail. However, only a minority take part in sport after or outside school. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory. Pupils understand what is right and wrong and the majority know what is required of them from a given situation. A very small minority exhibit challenging behaviour but this is managed well by the school. Pupils are happy to take on responsibilities in school. Year 6 pupils enjoy helping younger pupils to use the laptops. Pupils have been involved in designing the new school and taking responsibility for its care. The opportunities to take responsibility and contribute to the local community are not extensive, but pupils value them. Alongside average attendance, they contribute to pupils' satisfactory skills to assist their future economic well-being. Pupils from different cultures relate effectively in school and are interested in other pupils' faiths.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	3
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	3
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	3
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

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Whilst there are examples of good teaching, it is satisfactory overall. Where teaching is good, the pace of learning is lively and individual pupils are clear about what they are learning. Work is well planned to meet the different ages and abilities within the class, and resources and teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support learning. Planning builds well on how well pupils have learnt previously. Where teaching is satisfactory, planning is less effective in meeting the different needs of pupils and not enough account is taken of how well pupils have learnt previously. Because of this, the expectations of pupils in some lessons are not as high as they could be. The marking and feedback on pupils' work is also variable. Some good examples were seen during the inspection, for example the marking of a piece of science work where a Year 5 pupil was given clear guidance not only on how he had understood his science but also on how well he had used his writing skills in his answers. Elsewhere, pupils receive too little feedback on their work to help them to improve.

There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities to ensure that the curriculum is accessible. However, there is limited provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. Recent developments mean laptops are now easily accessible and are supporting development of information and communication technology (ICT) skills. There has been a strong emphasis on developing literacy and numeracy skills in the curriculum, but few opportunities are in place to develop these skills through other subjects. Schemes like 'Better Reading Partners' have improved reading skills and there has been a good emphasis on developing speaking and listening skills, but this sometimes restricts the time available to practise their reading and writing skills.

The school is effective in ensuring that pupils are cared for well. Considerable help is given to pupils and their families on entering the school particularly those who enter at non-usual times. There are good links with other agencies which increase the amount of support which is available to pupils and their families.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	3
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	3
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	3
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

Activities to improve teaching and accelerate progress are increasingly effective, but action points and measures of success are not precise enough. The development and training needs of individual members of staff are not identified clearly. Most subject and key stage leaders are new to their roles. Consequently, monitoring is not developed as

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well as it should because they have a limited overview of standards and progress in their area of responsibility. Governors have become increasingly involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work over the last year and have a sound understanding of how they can contribute to the school's future development. This includes establishing greater involvement of parents and carers. This partnership is currently satisfactory. The school is using its re-location to promote cohesion within the school and local community and this is having a positive impact. This has included its re-building facing into the estate which it serves. A number of planned projects are reaching out to local residents, such as a link with local allotments. The school works hard to promote equality. Inclusion is at the heart of the work of the school, ensuring that pupils are well cared for. All the appropriate policies and procedures are in place, but the school has not yet fully evaluated the impact of these on all groups of pupils. The school demonstrates that all necessary procedures to safeguard pupils on the school site are securely in place.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	3
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	3
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	3

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below the expected level. The majority have not had pre-school experiences. Social and communication skills are particularly low. They make sound progress in their learning, moving to Year 1 with standards which for boys and girls are below average. This is particularly the case in areas of personal development, communication and calculating. The Nursery and Reception classes promote a happy, enjoyable environment where

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pupils settle well. Good routines are quickly and effectively established and children behave well. Learning is organised effectively and good use is made of the indoor and outdoor spaces. Assessment is regular and used well to inform planning of the class's learning. However, it is not used systematically to identify the next steps for an individual child's learning. The school has increased its emphasis on linking letters and sounds through guided work. This is leading to greater independent use of letters and their sounds in child-initiated play. Good relationships are established with parents and carers through the induction process and many stay for a few minutes at the start of the day to help settle their children. The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is newly appointed this term, as is the other member of the teaching staff. There is a good team spirit and strong support from senior leaders to develop the skills of the new leader.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Almost all of the very small number of parents and carers who responded to the inspection questionnaire were positive about the school's work. Three concerns were expressed. They related to pupils' safety, to provision for special educational needs and to behaviour. These concerns were followed up during the inspection and no apparent weaknesses were found in the school's systems. Inspectors spoke to a few parents at the start of the school day. They were very satisfied with the school's work and much appreciated the 'new start' which the new buildings had brought.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Water Hall Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 12 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 285 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	10	83	1	8	1	8	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	4	33	6	50	1	8	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	4	33	8	67	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	3	25	7	58	0	0	1	8
The teaching is good at this school	6	50	5	42	1	8	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	2	17	8	67	1	8	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	5	42	5	42	1	8	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	3	25	9	75	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	5	42	6	50	1	8	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	3	25	7	58	2	17	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	2	17	8	67	2	17	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	3	15	8	67	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	6	50	5	42	1	8	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement. ■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils. ■ The quality of teaching. ■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships. ■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



16 November 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Water Hall Primary School, Milton Keynes MK2 3QF

Thank you for giving us such a warm welcome on our recent visit, and for sharing your views on your school in discussions and through questionnaires. It has been very helpful. We would like to share with you what we found out.

- Your school provides you with a satisfactory standard of education.
- You make satisfactory progress in your work and are able to do most of the things we expect by the time you leave the school.
- You are very proud of your new school and its courtyard. We were impressed with the way you were involved in designing it, and the way you look after it.
- You enjoy school a great deal, especially when you are active and doing things.
- You like to take on responsibilities and to help others including younger pupils in your school. Your school is planning more opportunities for you to be involved and we know you will be keen to volunteer.
- Your headteacher and his staff look after you really well and because of that you feel safe in school. You trust the adults in your school and know they will help you if you need it.

We are asking the school to make these improvements.

- Help you to improve your reading and writing skills so that you read and write as often as possible in different subjects and understand better how to improve your work.
- Make sure that adults help you to move on more quickly with the next steps of your learning.
- Make sure that the adults in charge check carefully how well the school is doing and plan carefully for improvements to the school.

We hope you will help your headteacher and his staff by continuing to work hard in lessons.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Westbrook

Lead inspector

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