

William Harding Combined School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110358
Local Authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	337476
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Reporting inspector	Daniel Towl HMI

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	672
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alf Rogers
Headteacher	Marc Ackland
Date of previous school inspection	2 November 2006
School address	Hazlehurst Drive Aylesbury Bucks HP21 9TJ
Telephone number	01296 421733
Fax number	01296 436605
Email address	head@whcs.bucks.sch.uk

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2009
Inspection number	337476

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It rates council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2009

Introduction

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 37 lessons, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and governors. They observed the school's work, looked at school policies, the school's assessment of pupils' progress, curriculum planning documents and pupils' work.

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

- the impact of the headteacher and senior managers in improving the past weak performance of the school
- the evenness of progress and achievements of all groups of pupils from Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 6.
- the consistency of the quality of teaching and learning across all classes.

Information about the school

William Harding Combined is a large school housed in two main buildings. Pupils come from very diverse socio-economic backgrounds. There is a higher than average number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The number of pupils with a statement of special educational need is also above average. The school has additional provision for pupils with physical disabilities and for those who require additional support for language development. These pupils are fully integrated within the main school population. At the time of the inspection there were 26 pupils receiving this additional support. Most pupils have White British backgrounds but there are about 20% of pupils from different ethnic minority groups of which about half have English as an additional language. The school provides before and after school care and a pre-school group which is managed by the governing body. The school has a fluctuating population. In 2008/2009 about one third of pupils in Year 6 did not start in the reception class. Quite a high proportion of these pupils entered late in Key Stage 2 and also had special educational needs. The headteacher has been in post for just over one year.

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?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Under the excellent leadership of the headteacher this school has made rapid and effective improvements which have had a very positive impact on the provision made for pupils and their achievements. Despite underperformance in recent years, especially in English, the majority of pupils are now making good progress and achieve well, reaching broadly average levels. Following a rigorous and accurate analysis of the school's performance the new headteacher and newly formed leadership team have embarked on an ambitious programme to improve the school further. This rapid turnaround reflects their good capacity to improve still further. They have put in place robust and effective practices and procedures to raise the quality of teaching and learning which has improved since the last inspection, especially in English. This helped to raise pupils' attainment at the end Key Stage 2 in the 2009 tests following a previous decline. English now matches more closely levels reached in mathematics.

Significant improvements have been made to the Early Years Foundation Stage which now provides a good education for children, having been identified as an area of the school that was inadequate. Despite the significant improvements, overall provision at Key Stage 1 does not yet match other more effective parts of the school. The school is fully aware of this.

The quality pupils' writing has improved since the last inspection because this has been a main focus for the school. Pupils are now writing effectively for a broader range of purposes, though spelling and presentation remain weak. The support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good and as a result they make good progress overall. All pupils, including those with physical disability, are involved as much as is possible in all the school's activities.

Pupils are well cared for. They are happy at school and enjoy their lessons. This is because relationships in the school are very supportive and most teaching is good. They achieve well because they have good attitudes towards learning and in most lessons tackle their tasks with enthusiasm. Pupils who join the school, other than in the Early Years Foundation Stage, often have had very disrupted schooling elsewhere. Many of these pupils do well and make good progress from a low starting point, sometimes in a relatively short time. They often develop more positive attitudes to school and learning. This enables them to transfer to secondary school with more confidence.

The school has significantly improved its procedures for checking pupils' progress. However pupils are not always fully aware of specific medium and longer term personal learning targets. In nearly all lessons teachers make it very clear what is expected of pupils.

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

The before and after school care and the pre-school provision in the William Harding Extended School is good, well managed and successfully meets the needs of the children and pupils. Staff have clear roles and responsibilities and are models of good practice. All statutory requirements are met. Children are well cared for and supported. The youngest pupils in the pre-school have a curriculum which meets the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and children make good progress in their learning. The extended school has outstanding relationships with parents and carers and provision for multi-cultural education is excellent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that pupils' achievements and progress are consistently good throughout all years by:
- improving teaching and learning, especially in Key Stage 1, through the provision of a more tailored curriculum which is based on accurate assessment of pupils' needs
- improving pupils' spelling and presentation skills in order to build on the improvements already made in writing
- establish a more consistent approach to using assessment information to set specific medium and longer term learning targets for pupils.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

Pupils behave well, enjoy attending and are attentive in lessons. They are keen to participate in activities and answer questions and offer ideas when asked. They make good progress and achieve well overall, though attainment is broadly average because of a legacy of underperformance. Improvements in learning and pupils' achievements are evident in lessons across the school, but are uneven. Learning is better overall in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 2 where there is some outstanding teaching which enthuses pupils so they give their best because they are engaged by stimulating presentations, challenging questions and opportunities to participate. Older pupils of all abilities showed they were proud of their work and demonstrated interest in a wide range of subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities learn effectively because of the good support they receive from teachers and skilled teaching assistants. This is a similar picture for those pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Pupils said that they felt safe in school and were not concerned about harassment and bullying. They were clear that there is always someone they could talk to if they had concerns. Pupils are aware of the key components of staying healthy by eating a balanced diet in order to reduce the risk of ill health in later life and also the importance of regular exercise. This is supported in school by regular physical education lessons and clubs such as athletics which is very well attended. Pupils are also gaining awards as part of the school travel plan which encourages walking to school. Pupils know that this not only for exercise but that it also helps to reduce pollution.

The new school council is beginning to provide a pupil voice and there are satisfactory

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

opportunities to contribute to the wider community. For example pupils including those with physical disabilities took part in the Paralympics Handover

Ceremony and some pupils are going to sing in a national 'Young Voices' concert in London.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
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	2
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	3
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

How effective is the provision?

Teaching has improved markedly over the last year. Key to this successful improvement has been the focus on pupils' learning, evident in lesson plans and in the use of clear learning objectives. This helps pupils to assess themselves and check how well they are doing, which has been an area of development for the school. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to take part in lessons inviting them to answer questions and getting them to work with each other and independently. This occurs throughout the school. In the majority of lessons the pace of learning is good and the high expectations of behaviour and pupils' willingness to participate leads to good progress. The good features of the best lessons are not yet firmly established in all classes and a few lessons lose focus and clear direction. This leads to less effective learning. In most

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

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

lessons assessment is used effectively to make sure that the work is challenging, although this is not consistent across the school, in particular across Key Stage 1. Pupils welcome the comments teachers make in marking their work but they are less clear about personal learning targets through which they could measure their own progress. The curriculum motivates pupils of all backgrounds and abilities to work hard and make good progress. There is a strong and effective focus on learning in teachers' planning. Good links are made between developing good skills in English and learning in other subjects, such as science and history. Year 6 pupils had written very interesting diary extracts during their study of World War Two.

There is good provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Most teaching assistants provide effective support especially helping those pupils with more severe needs to take a full role in tasks and activities. One pupil had the use of a laptop computer in order to facilitate a valuable contribution to writing activities. The school has been very successful in implementing a reading recovery programme and has been recognised as a centre of excellence in this work.

Pupils' physical needs are catered for with regular good quality physical education lessons and after school clubs. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities which are attended well. There are opportunities to learn to play musical instruments and French is taught to pupils in Years 3 ' 6. Strong partnerships exist with other schools and colleges. These are helping the school to enrich the curriculum through participation in a multicultural dance festival, sports activities and teaching French. Other excellent partnerships exist with the local pupil referral unit which has helped with behaviour management and with the educational welfare officer to help with persistent absenteeism which has declined.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
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	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and senior leaders have established a clear direction for the school which is based on a thorough and accurate analysis of strengths and weaknesses. There has been a rigorous approach to improving the quality of teaching and learning. This has had a significant impact on raising pupils' achievements which are now good in most lessons. The use of the best role models in spreading effective practice has been largely successful, but not consistently so in all classes. The restructuring of the leadership team has taken full account of the needs of all groups of pupils, for example there is a

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

specific plan to ensure that pupils who have English as an additional language receive the provision they require. Incidences of oppressive behaviour and bullying are very low and membership of clubs fully represents the diversity of abilities and backgrounds of the school community.

Good partnerships have been established that both widen the curriculum and learning opportunities for all pupils. These partnerships are helping to meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils. There are good links with outside specialist agencies such as physiotherapists and speech therapists which ensure that pupils with the most severe needs receive the help they need. Several parents commented that they would like to receive more information about their children's progress. The school is fully aware that it needs to do more in this aspect of its work.

Governors meet their statutory duties and are well organised. They are beginning to take a more proactive role in the school's self evaluation and in determining the strategic direction of the school. The school meets all the requirements for safeguarding and procedures and practices are satisfactory. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and there are good procedures for vetting and appointing staff.

The school has accurately identified its strengths and weaknesses in respect of how it develops community cohesion. There is good and effective cohesion within the school community and there are plans to broaden its activities to include the wider community more effectively.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
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	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	3
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

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

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Last year children entered Key Stage 1 slightly below average having made at best satisfactory progress. However significant improvements have been made and children are now making good progress and achieving well. The new Early Years Foundation Stage manager has set a new and appropriate direction which is having a very positive impact. There is an inclusive approach which is well planned, managed and robustly monitored. The assessment of learning has improved and is now giving a more accurate picture of how well the children are doing. Consequently activities are well planned and matched to children's needs. Children experience a good balance of activities between those that they initiate themselves and those which are led by adults. The school is aware that the learning environment requires improvement in order to maximise learning opportunities and has plans in place to achieve this.

The pre-school early years provision of the William Harding Extended School meets all requirements for registration. The management of this provision is good. The welfare of children is promoted effectively. There is continuous provision for indoor and outdoor learning and there is an inclusive approach by staff which is successfully meeting the needs of children.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

Parents are mostly very supportive of the school. Inspectors agree with parents that pupils enjoy school and are kept safe. Some parents expressed a view that their children were not making enough progress or that they were not receiving enough information about progress. The school is aware that it has more to do to improve communication with parents. Whilst there has been some underperformance in previous years, inspectors found that most pupils are now making good progress. A few parents were concerned about behaviour and its management. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and improving and that the school had good procedures for dealing with any incidents.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at William Harding 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 12 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 169 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 672 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	106	63	59	35	1	1	2	1
The school keeps my child safe	97	57	68	40	3	2	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	56	33	96	57	12	7	2	1
My child is making enough progress at this school	68	40	79	47	19	11	1	1
The teaching is good at this school	79	46	76	45	4	2	3	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	61	36	84	50	15	9	3	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	77	46	85	50	5	3	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)	58	35	81	48	9	5	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	65	39	81	48	10	6	3	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	55	33	88	52	14	8	4	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	51	30	94	56	10	6	2	1
The school is led and managed effectively	77	46	77	46	5	3	3	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	92	54	61	36	5	3	4	2

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.



1 October 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of William Harding Combined School, Aylesbury, HP21 9TJ

Thank you very much for helping us during the inspection of your school. William Harding Combined is a good school. The William Harding Extended School is also good. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy attending and were impressed with your good behaviour and positive attitudes in lessons. All the staff are doing a good job and most of you are making good progress with your learning. Your headteacher, together with the staff, are all working hard to make the school even better.

We have asked the headteacher to improve three aspects of the school.

These are:

- to make sure that all the lessons in every year group are the very best they can be so that you learn even better,
 - to make sure that you have some targets so that you are very clear about what you need to do to improve your work,
- and finally, one aspect that you can all help with,
- to improve your spelling and make the work in your books neater, especially your writing.

Thank you again.

Good luck in the future.

Yours faithfully

Daniel Towl HMI

Lead Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 08456 404045, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.