

Water Hall Primary School

Fern Grove, Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK2 3QF

Inspection dates

13–14 March 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Satisfactory	3
	This inspection:	Outstanding	1
Achievement of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an outstanding school.

- Pupils' achievement is outstanding. From starting points well below those typically expected for their age when they enter the school, they make exceptional progress reaching average standards in English and above average standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Outstanding teaching ensures pupils make rapid progress in English and mathematics. Teachers check on pupils' progress and make sure lessons match the needs of the pupils.
- Any pupils requiring extra help with their learning are very well supported by other adults and this ensures they make excellent progress.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They are keen to learn and are very helpful and respectful to each other and adults. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds get on well and help each other to learn.
- The school has continued a strong commitment to improvement since the previous inspection. This has resulted in pupils learning at a faster rate.
- The imaginative curriculum excites the pupils and makes a very positive contribution to their learning. The curriculum is extremely well matched to the pupils' needs. This is as a result of good planning by the senior leaders.
- Pupils' progress in reading is exceptionally strong due to the systematic way the sounds that letters make are taught in the early years.
- Progress is particularly rapid in Reception, where the teaching and leadership are major strengths of the school.
- The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors have led the improvement in the quality of teaching by providing clear guidance to teachers on how to increase the pace of learning in their lessons.
- Parents are extremely supportive of the school, and the school is taking imaginative steps to increase their involvement in their children's learning.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 20 lessons, two of which were observed jointly with the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors looked at pupils' work and listened to some pupils reading.
- Meetings were held with pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and middle managers. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- There were seven responses to the on-line questionnaire (Parent View), too few to be reported; however, the inspectors talked to some parents and received a letter and an email from parents. They also took into account the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including the school's own data on pupils' progress, planning and monitoring documentation, records relating to pupils' behaviour, attendance and safeguarding and the performance management of teachers.

Inspection team

John Taylor, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Lynn Alexander	Additional Inspector
Brigid de Rivaz	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a larger than average sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which is additional funding given for children who are looked after, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children of service families, is well above the national average. There are three pupils who are looked after by the local authority and no pupils from service families.
- About one quarter of pupils are from minority ethnic groups and one fifth speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, supported through school action, is above average. The proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- About a quarter of pupils join or leave the school at times other than the usual dates for admission.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in a mixed-age Nursery and Reception class. In Key Stage 1 there is a Year 1 class, a mixed-age Years 1 and 2 class and a Year 2 class. In Key Stage 2 pupils are taught in mixed-age classes: three Years 3 and 4 classes and three Years 5 and 6 classes.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing to match attainment in reading and mathematics by ensuring pupils are provided with more opportunities to:
 - further develop their writing skills
 - review and improve their own written work.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is outstanding

- Children's skills on entry to the Nursery are well below those expected of their age. They make rapid progress in the Nursery and Reception classes due to the outstanding teaching. The activities are precisely matched to the needs of all children and this supports their learning extremely well. The strong focus on teaching letters and sounds ensures they rapidly develop their reading skills in the stimulating well-resourced learning environment.
- The average point scores of the pupils known to be eligible for free school meals show that the gap in attainment, in English and mathematics, between these pupils and others is closing. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after are about one term behind other pupils in English and about half a term behind in mathematics. This is because of effective actions taken by the school to provide a range of support for learning. Records kept by the school show that extra help is effective in improving progress, which is faster in the school than for these pupils nationally.
- There are no significant differences in the progress of different groups of pupils, reflecting the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity and ensuring that no pupil is discriminated against. Pupils from different ethnic groups out-perform similar pupils in other schools. Pupils who join the school speaking little or no English make rapid progress because of excellent support, enabling them to develop their language and communication skills extremely well.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs also make outstanding progress because they are exceptionally well supported.
- The progress pupils make in reading is exceptional because of the strong focus the school has on teaching letters and sounds in a systematic way. As a result, a higher than average number of pupils achieved above the expected standard in the phonics screening test at the end of Year 1. Well-trained teaching assistants play a highly effective part in teaching reading skills. Pupils enjoy reading and are given clearly focused tasks in the lessons to support their progress.
- The school's systems for regularly checking on pupils' progress are used very effectively to identify and provide support quickly for any who may fall behind. As a result of this support, much of which comes from highly trained adults, most pupils make rapid progress. This includes pupils who join the school later than Reception and at different times during the year.
- Attainment at the end of Year 6 has continued to rise. In reading and mathematics it is above average. Attainment in writing is not as high as in reading because pupils have less frequent opportunities to review and improve their work and further develop their writing skills.
- Parents are appreciative of the improvements in the school and the rapid pace at which the children learn.

The quality of teaching

is outstanding

- The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection because school leaders have made sure that all staff are well trained and accountable for the achievement of all pupils. The quality of teaching is now outstanding and as a result pupils make rapid progress.
- Teachers make sure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities so it is not too hard or too easy. They make it clear they want the pupils to succeed through expressing their high expectations, setting challenging activities which pupils respond to enthusiastically, and making clear the links between skills learnt in one lesson which can be used in others. Teachers are very skilful at questioning pupils and listen carefully to their answers, so they can check understanding and correct any errors. Their questioning also guides the pupils' learning and helps them gain an excellent understanding of the skills and knowledge being taught.
- In lessons pupils are clear about what they are learning and what they have to do. Teachers' marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging. It shows how the work can be improved and

tells pupils what their next steps should be. In many cases pupils readily respond to the teachers' comments. Scrutiny of the pupils' work shows that this careful marking has led to fast progress.

- Reading is very well taught through the systematic approach to teaching phonics (the sounds letters make). As a result pupils enjoy reading, make rapid progress and consequently can use their phonic skills in their rapidly improving independent writing.
- Mathematics teaching reflects the same systematic approach and as a result pupils are able to use and apply the skills well.
- The school's imaginative and exciting curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to use their reading skills across a wide range of subjects, although this is not as well developed in writing.
- Teaching assistants are well trained. They make an excellent contribution to the quality of the teaching and the pupils' achievement.
- Teachers make lessons interesting. As a result relationships between adults and pupils are excellent; there is a strong emphasis on learning in the school and homework is valued. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 mathematics lesson, when a pupil came to realisation that he had learnt how to calculate 10% of a number, the teacher encouragingly commented, 'You're on fire today'.
- The teaching of small groups, to help pupils catch up, is well planned and accurately matched to the pupils' needs. This results in the pupils making excellent progress.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are outstanding

- Pupils really enjoy coming to school and feel very safe. They have an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves safe, and talk very confidently about internet safety.
- Their behaviour around the school and in the play areas is extremely calm and they show respect for one another and for adults.
- The school places pupils' interests at the centre of all it does and ensures that all pupils have equal opportunities to succeed. Discrimination of any kind is not tolerated.
- The school has worked hard so that the pupils know about the many different backgrounds they come from and respect these differences; as a result the pupils get on very well together.
- Pupils have an exemplary attitude to learning in lessons and they are very ready to help each other learn. Pupils work together extremely well in pairs and in groups and move purposely between activities. Teachers encourage them to listen to each other and this has a very positive impact on their attitudes and progress. Pupils are very skilled in commenting on each other's work and learning from each other.
- Attendance has improved, due to the effective and imaginative efforts of the school leaders and family support worker which have focused on the parents of the younger children. Initiatives such as 'stay and play' and 'have lunch with your child' have encouraged parents to form stronger links with the school and to support their children's learning.
- Pupils are keen to please staff; by expressing their views, explaining what they have learnt and raising their own questions, they make excellent contributions to their own learning.

The leadership and management are outstanding

- The school leadership has kept a strong focus on continuing improvement. This is very evident in the improved achievement, teaching and behaviour since the previous inspection. The school shows a strong capacity to improve. The excellent leadership team has provided robust and accurate monitoring of lessons, which has been used to improve the quality of teaching.
- Accurate monitoring of pupils' progress and the ability to give accurate feedback to teachers on how to improve their teaching has caused this sustained improvement.

- The staff are enthusiastic about what the school wants to achieve; they are very supportive of the school leaders as shown by their universally positive response to the staff questionnaires.
 - The school has established a system for setting and reviewing targets for teachers to help them improve their work. The school leaders have used this information to plan training to meet the needs of the staff.
 - The local authority has monitored the school's performance and given its rapid improvement has only needed to provide 'light-touch' support in recent years. The school has led a local group of schools in checking the work of Year 6 pupils.
 - The school has well-developed systems for tracking pupils' progress. These are used well to set challenging targets and monitor the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. The school leaders promote and check the equality of pupils' opportunities for their learning. For example, the additional income received by the school through the pupil premium to support those pupils is used effectively to accelerate the progress they make, mostly through additional adult support and small group teaching. The school is determined that all groups of pupils should have an equal opportunity to succeed and that there should be no discrimination of any kind.
 - The school's requirements for safeguarding are very well established, robust and meet requirements.
 - **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are well informed about the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a good overview of the school's performance, including the pupils' progress in different subjects.
 - Governors are kept informed about the quality of teaching and are aware that this has improved. They have a clear understanding of the school's finances. They know that the money for pupils who are entitled to the pupil premium has been spent on supporting them and they check the difference this has made to their achievement. They have a robust overview of the performance management procedures for staff and ensure this is linked to salary increases. They are aware of where previous underperformance has been tackled. They make sure that the headteacher's performance management is carried out thoroughly. They meet all their statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding.
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What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	110322
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	401113

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 of pupils on the school roll	303
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Elliot Sharp
Headteacher	Tony Draper
Date of previous school inspection	12–13 November 2009
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