

William Harding School

Hazlehurst Drive, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP21 9TJ

Inspection dates

20–21 October 2016 and 15 November 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires Improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors have radically improved the school. They have acted to resolve successfully the issues identified at the previous inspection.
- Pupils now make good progress in all year groups because of good-quality teaching and accurate assessment.
- By the end of early years a greater proportion of children than found nationally reach a good level of development. Pupils are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Standards at the end of key stage 1 are above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In key stage 2 pupils are making good progress from their starting points. However, the percentage of pupils, especially boys, who reached the standards expected for their age in reading and mathematics in 2016 was below average.
- Pupils behave well and the school's work to promote their personal development is good.
- Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those who are registered in the additional resourced provisions, make good progress. This is because of the careful attention that teachers and learning support assistants provide to meet pupils' needs.
- The school tracks disadvantaged pupils meticulously. All who are disadvantaged, including those who are most able and disadvantaged, make good, and at times exceptional, progress. However, attendance for disadvantaged pupils, while improving, is still a little below average.
- Teachers do not always have the highest expectations for those pupils who are most able. They often do not provide challenging enough work in lessons or for homework.
- Parents report that they are unclear about the lines of communication between themselves, class teachers and leaders.
- Those who are middle leaders do not monitor the progress of different groups of pupils when they look at their work.
- The school's website does not fully conform to the requirements of the Department for Education.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that there are consistently high expectations in teaching so that:
 - those pupils who are most able are routinely given challenging work to stretch their knowledge, skills and understanding
 - the proportion of pupils, particularly boys, who reach the standards expected for their age at the end of key stage 2 increases in reading and mathematics.
- Strengthen the impact of leadership and management on pupils' progress by ensuring that:
 - that there are clear lines of communication between parents, class teachers and phase leaders
 - the attendance of those who are eligible for the pupil premium continues to improve
 - middle leaders strengthen their impact by monitoring the progress of different groups of pupils when looking at pupils' work
 - the school's website is fully compliant with the Department for Education's requirements.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders and governors have worked effectively to put in place the required improvements to ensure the school is good. The issues identified at the previous inspection have all been resolved. In the Reception class and key stage 1, higher proportions of pupils than found nationally reach the standards expected for their age. In key stage 2 pupils make good progress from their starting points.
- Teaching and learning is well managed. The headteacher has ensured that the quality of teaching has greatly improved over the past couple of years. The performance of teachers is carefully monitored.
- The curriculum has had a positive impact on pupils' personal as well as academic development. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural skills are carefully developed. Pupils study a wide range of subjects. For example, in Year 1 pupils found out about palaeontology when investigating dinosaurs. Pupils gain a good understanding of design technology; those in Year 4 had to design a bridge that would withstand an earthquake. Pupils investigate historical periods in interesting ways, such as in Year 5, where they had to write poems about different forms of punishment.
- Prior to the current building work, the school offered an extensive range of extra-curricular activities. However, some of these have had to be curtailed until the works have been completed. The curriculum has been reviewed recently, but the school website has not been updated. Consequently, there is no clear indication what pupils will be studying in each year group.
- The curriculum strongly supports pupils' understanding of British values. Pupils show a respect for cultural diversity and have a good understanding of various faiths. They learn about the importance of promoting equality, for example displays around the school celebrate those who have won medals in the recent Paralympics. Pupils know about the rule of law and democracy.
- Primary sports funding is well used to develop staff confidence and expertise. The impact of this has been that greater numbers of pupils, including those who do not usually engage in sport, take part in activities. The sports funding has recently been audited but the website has not been appropriately updated.
- Additional funding for those who are eligible for the pupil premium is well used. This has been a key focus of the school's work and the impact is evident in every year group. Progress for these pupils is always good and at times exceptional. The impact of the funding is much more positive for current pupils than was evident in published data for past pupils.
- The local authority has provided extensive support to ensure that the school made the rapid improvements needed to be good. Leaders at the school have acted promptly on their advice. School leadership is well able to drive forward further improvements.
- Those pupils who are in the additional resourced provisions do well because leaders constantly monitor their progress and evaluate the impact of interventions. There is an up-to-date special educational needs policy; however, it was not on the school website.

- Some middle leaders are new in post and are still developing in their roles. In particular, they do not monitor the progress of different groups of pupils when looking at their work. This hinders how effectively they can support the quality of teaching.
- The vast majority of parents would recommend the school. However, there are some issues regarding communication. Parents of pupils from Year 3 onwards expressed concerns that they cannot have informal conversations with their class teacher at the end of the day. Other parents are unclear about the roles of the different leaders and whom they needed to talk to if they had any worries.
- The school's website is not fully compliant with the Department for Education's statutory requirements. For various reasons, both school leaders and governors have overlooked this and not carefully monitored the website.

Governance of the school

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and its current improvement priorities.
- Additional funding for pupil premium and sports funding is carefully monitored. Governors hold leaders carefully to account to demonstrate the positive impact it has on pupils' outcomes.
- Governors have a secure understanding of the quality of teaching. In the past, where needed, they have made difficult decisions in order to improve teaching.
- Governors have expertise in a number of areas and therefore are able to ask challenging questions of school leaders. They understand school performance information.
- Governors do not record on the school website their business and financial interests, their roles in other schools or the governance structure in this school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- A particular strength is the way the school works with a range of outside agencies to ensure that pupils, whatever their circumstances, are kept safe. Records relating to employment checks are meticulous. Policies are regularly updated and staff are well trained in child protection. They have also had training on child sexual exploitation.
- All pupils who were spoken to said that they felt safe at school. The curriculum has been designed to ensure that pupils have opportunities to consider their personal safety in a range of circumstances.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching across the school has improved considerably since the last inspection. There is now a strong culture for learning across all the classes.
- Those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from well-trained support assistants. For example, assistants use targeted questions to prompt pupils to better understand tasks. Personal development and academic progress is good because staff develop pupils' confidence and allow them time to think how best to complete activities.
- Those pupils from the two resourced provisions receive a range of well-planned support. Specialist staff work closely with teachers to overcome the challenges that pupils may meet. For example, staff advise specialist speech and language teachers

about the vocabulary pupils may encounter in each topic. These specialist staff then work with pupils to ensure that the key words are well understood before a topic is started. Outside agencies, including speech therapists and occupational therapists, are fully involved in assisting pupils who attend the resourced provisions to make good progress.

- Teachers help those pupils who are most able and disadvantaged to develop the skills they need to make strong progress. This is because all disadvantaged pupils in the school are monitored meticulously by leaders. It has been a key school priority.
- Progress for pupils who are most able but not disadvantaged is not as strong. This is because in some lessons teachers do not challenge this group of pupils sufficiently and expectations are sometimes too low. This is also the case regarding the homework that is provided. Many pupils said it was too easy and had little benefit.
- The teaching of writing is very effective. Pupils write regularly and extensively across a range of subjects. They plan, edit and redraft their work carefully.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to read. Older pupils read fluently. Most pupils are able to express their views about a favourite book or author. The most able readers in key stage 1 are well equipped with the skills needed to read unfamiliar words and read more challenging books. Those who are less skilled are given frequent opportunities to read to an adult in school to help them improve.
- In mathematics pupils deepen their mathematical understanding by frequently engaging in practical activities to solve everyday problems.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The school develops pupils' self-confidence through activities such as residential trips. It encourages them to aspire and achieve as well as they can. In every class there is a display celebrating a role model who pupils find inspirational.
- Pupils say that bullying does sometimes happen, but almost all are confident in the support that staff would provide to deal with their concerns. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire or who had informal discussions with inspectors have more positive views about how the school deals with bullying than their parents.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe. They know how to use the internet safely and the dangers associated with roads and railways. Pupils are well aware that they must not talk to strangers.
- The school has recently appointed a matron to deal with medical issues and ensure that pupils are well looked after during their time in school.
- Those pupils who attend the resourced provisions benefit from good support from the school and outside agencies to develop their physical and emotional well-being.
- The breakfast and after-school clubs provide a calm and purposeful start and end to the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils around the school are polite and courteous to each other. In lessons, they respond quickly to directions given by the teacher.

- Records show that there are few incidents of poor behaviour. Those pupils who do have difficulty in managing their behaviour are well supported by staff who carefully de-escalate any incidents.
- Overall levels of attendance are similar to national averages. However, the attendance of disadvantaged pupils is lower than average. The school is working hard to address this issue and improvements have already been made.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has increased considerably. It is now good in all year groups.
- In 2015 and 2016 a higher percentage of pupils, when compared to the national average, met the expected standard in the phonics (letters and the sounds they make) check at the end of Year 1. Boys do particularly well when compared to national figures, and almost all met the expected standard.
- The percentage of pupils reaching the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 was similar to the national average in 2016. However, the proportions of pupils working at greater depth, particularly in reading and writing, were lower than average. This is because throughout the school those who are most able are not sufficiently challenged to stretch their skills.
- In recent years, standards at the end of key stage 2 have improved. . However, the percentage of pupils working at the expected standard in 2016 was lower than the national average in reading and mathematics because pupils leaving Year 6 had had many years of teaching that was not good enough. Recent teacher assessments indicate stronger performance of pupils who are currently in the school. However, boys still lag a little behind girls.
- In all year groups, disadvantaged pupils are making good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The school tracks these pupils very diligently. Expenditure for the pupil premium is carefully monitored for its impact on progress. As a result, last year many of these pupils made particularly strong progress.
- Those who are disadvantaged and most able make good and occasionally exceptional progress, for example in Year 1 reading and in Year 5 mathematics. Progress is stronger for these pupils than for other most-able pupils because of the whole-school focus on meticulously tracking disadvantaged pupils and adjusting provision where needed.
- Inspectors found that the above-average attainment of those who are most able, but not disadvantaged, is not always fully capitalised upon. This is because there is often a lack of challenge for them in lessons. Pupils start lessons by doing work that is too easy. This has capped the potential of these most-able pupils. Both parents and pupils alike have said that sometimes homework is too simple. Consequently, most-able pupils do not develop their learning as much as they could either in lessons or homework tasks.
- There are no marked differences in the progress of different ethnic groups. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress because of the rich speaking and listening opportunities in the classroom.

- In science, pupils attain well. In key stage 1, nearly all pupils are working at the standards expected for their age. In key stage 2, pupils develop the skills to think scientifically, to conduct experiments and evaluate the outcomes. Year 6 pupils had created a scientific working wall where they considered evidence to prove the theory of evolution. They had done extensive research on how animals, such as polar bears, adapt to their environment.
- Those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those pupils who are in both of the additional resourced provisions, make good progress. Interventions, which are particularly effective in key stage 2, are targeted to each pupil's specific need.

Early years provision

Good

- A majority of children attend William Harding pre-school before joining the Reception classes. Their knowledge and skills on entry to pre-school vary, usually depending on whether they have had early years education elsewhere beforehand. Good quality provision for three- and four-year olds, concentrating on developing children's social, emotional and communication skills sets them up well for future learning. Mirroring the routine of daily phonics and early mathematical sessions, together with opportunities to join in some activities with the Reception classes, means that when the time comes children settle in quickly to school.
- Sensible use of additional funding for disadvantaged young children supports their learning well so that by the time they leave pre-school they are catching up with their classmates. The majority of children join the Reception classes with knowledge and skills which are mostly typical for their age. They make good progress because communication, literacy, mathematics and phonics skills are effectively taught. As a result, a higher proportion than found nationally reach a good level of development. Children are well prepared for their learning in Year 1.
- Teachers plan activities that stimulate and motivate children. For example, there is a large stage in the Reception classes for children to perform on as well as numerous themed role play areas. Children enjoy taking on responsibilities such as looking after the pet rabbit. Outside activities are well planned to complement those indoors and develop a range of skills.
- Teachers and other adults are vigilant about children's safety and well-being. As a result, children are happy and safe. Behaviour is good and in the main children cooperate well with each other.
- Good links with specialists in school and with other agencies mean support for children such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective. Different groups of children are tracked carefully from pre-school onwards. However, although staff plan activities to stretch most-able children they do not formally keep a check on the impact of this work on these children's progress.
- Parents regard the early years provision highly. They value the close partnership they have with staff that enables them to share 'wow moments' in their child's development.
- Leadership of early years is strong. Governors take a keen interest, monitoring this aspect of the school's work through their Extended Schools committee. The early years leader has a detailed understanding of the strengths and areas for further improvement. Senior practitioners in the pre-school take account of their own

evaluations and others' feedback to develop well-considered action plans. Staff training is focused on ensuring that expectations are consistently high.

School details

Unique reference number	110358
Local authority	Buckinghamshire
Inspection number	10019867

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 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	647
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mark Bateman
Headteacher	Dominic Hughes
Telephone number	01296421733
Website	www.williamhardingschool.co.uk
Email address	office@whcs.bucks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	30 September – 1 October 2014

Information about this school

- William Harding School is much larger than the average-sized primary school. At the time of the inspection there were four classes in the Reception Year and in Year 1 and three classes in each of the other year groups. The school is currently undergoing an extensive building programme and will increase in size over time to have four classes in each year group.
- The percentage of pupils from minority ethnic groups is similar to the national average. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium is well below that found in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is similar to the national average.

- The school currently runs two additional resourced provisions. One is for pupils who have physical needs and the other is for pupils who have speech and language difficulties. All pupils are fully integrated into classes.
- William Harding Extended School is managed by the governing body. It offers pre-school provision for children from the term following their third birthday and breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs. The pre-school currently provides the equivalent of 94 part-time places. This is set to increase to 118 places from Easter 2017.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information about sports funding, the curriculum or governors on the school's website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors first visited the school in October 2016. Through no fault of the school, the inspection was deemed incomplete. One of Her Majesty’s Inspectors visited the school in November 2016 to gather more evidence about the school’s overall effectiveness.
- During the first visit, inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes in the main school and visited the after-school club. Twenty eight lessons and part lessons were visited, many of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. During the second visit the inspector visited the breakfast club and observed teaching and learning in the pre-school.
- Meetings were held with three groups of pupils and inspectors looked at pupils’ work and listened to some pupils reading. Inspectors considered the 50 responses to the online pupil questionnaire. They also talked informally with pupils at break time about what it is like to be a pupil at William Harding.
- Inspectors took account of 89 responses to the online Parent View questionnaire and also spoke to parents at the end of the school day.
- The views expressed by members of staff through 28 online questionnaires were considered.
- Inspectors held meetings with governors, parents and a range of teachers and senior staff.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation and policies including the school improvement plan. Information about the performance of the school in comparison with other schools nationally was considered, along with documents about pupils’ current attainment and progress. Documents recording checks on the quality of teaching and learning, and records relating to behaviour, attendance, child protection and safeguarding were also examined.

Inspection team

Liz Bowes, lead inspector (October)	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Bradley, lead inspector (November)	Her Majesty’s Inspector
Andrew Clark	Ofsted Inspector
Nigel Cook	Ofsted Inspector
Graham Marshall	Ofsted Inspector

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