

Heronsgate School

Lichfield Down, Walnut Tree, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire MK7 7BW

Inspection dates

25–26 April 2017

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
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is determined that all pupils do their very best and achieve well.
- Leaders have high expectations and are ambitious for their pupils. They ensure that teachers set challenging and interesting work and regularly check how well pupils are doing.
- Teachers' strong subject knowledge and effective use of questioning enable pupils to deepen their knowledge and skills across all subjects.
- Staff benefit from well-planned training and support which have been effective in helping to raise achievement, in particular for pupils currently in the school.
- Leaders make effective use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. As a result, disadvantaged pupils currently in the school make good progress.
- Leaders cater well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Consequently, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- Good teaching and high-quality experiences have resulted in pupils' positive attitudes towards all aspects of their learning.
- Teachers plan exciting activities that are well matched to pupils' needs, such as working with visiting authors, school visits and residential trips.
- Pupils behave well in school and are supportive of each other. During breaktimes they play cooperatively, and they are well supervised by adults.
- Governors and officers from the Milton Keynes Education Trust provide effective support and challenge to the leadership team. They know the school well and have high expectations for all pupils.
- Not enough pupils in key stage 2 reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2016. However, the very large majority of current pupils are making rapid and sustained progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Leaders have rightly identified that some groups of pupils have not yet made as much progress in mathematics and writing as their classmates.
- Although the curriculum and teaching meet the needs of pupils, leaders recognise the need to provide greater links between subjects and more opportunities for pupils to develop reasoning skills.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve pupils' progress, in particular those with lower prior attainment, by
 - ensuring that pupils write accurately and with greater confidence
 - improving pupils' ability to use and apply their mathematical skills.
- Refine the curriculum so that pupils have more opportunities to use and develop their reasoning skills and make greater links across a wide range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher has a clear vision for the school and is rightly determined to ensure that all pupils work hard and achieve to the best of their ability. Since the last inspection, she has acted with determination to introduce a range of successful initiatives to raise standards. For example, she has strengthened the role and effectiveness of leaders so that teaching is now consistently good and pupils enjoy coming to this caring school.
- Leaders are very ambitious for pupils and set high expectations for them, which they communicate clearly to all staff. Leaders make rigorous checks to confirm that teaching meets pupils' individual needs, and that pupils are challenged in their learning. Consequently, the very large majority of pupils are motivated to learn and make good progress across the curriculum.
- Staff benefit from a wide range of training opportunities provided by leaders, outside organisations, the Milton Keynes Education Trust and by local schools. This investment in the skills and knowledge of staff has enabled them to develop sharper approaches to teaching and learning to meet pupils' needs well.
- Pupils follow an effective, broad and balanced curriculum. They are given opportunities to take part in some engaging cross-curricular work so that their writing, reading and mathematics skills are developed through a range of subjects. Pupils enjoy this work and it is having a very positive impact on their overall progress. Leaders rightly recognise that although the curriculum meets pupils' needs, there are still further improvements to be made to help pupils develop reasoning skills and make even greater links across the range of subjects.
- Teachers provide additional events and residential visits that further support and enrich pupils' learning. For example, this year, pupils have visited a space centre, enjoyed a 'Viking Day', and hosted a visiting author who led writing workshops. Year 6 pupils are looking forward to their residential trip to France.
- There is a range of extra-curricular activities to promote pupils' wider development. These include cooking, an 'eco-club', a football club, tennis and a gardening club, where pupils grow and pickle produce for sale. The school's choir meets weekly and pupils have the opportunity to perform at a variety of venues. For example, in addition to the school's concerts, the choir performs at a local secondary school, a large shopping centre and at schools' music festivals.
- Leaders make effective use of pupils' assessment information to further promote their good progress. Staff meet regularly to review how well pupils are doing and put in place well-targeted interventions to address any underachievement. As a result, current pupils are making better progress than previously.
- Year group managers ensure that there is strong provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils are very positive about the caring support that they receive from staff. Leaders effectively promote British values, diversity and 'how to keep safe' through assemblies, the curriculum and through displays around school.
- Physical education and sport premium funding is spent effectively to promote sport and

physical education across the school. Leaders use the funding well to support staff training and provide a range of opportunities for pupils to take part in sports competitions and sporting events. Pupils enjoy and participate in a variety of sports, including cricket, football and athletics.

- Leaders make effective use of additional funding to support pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Consequently, these pupils' progress is accelerating.
- As a result of the caring and nurturing environment, most pupils are confident and show good levels of resilience, and the perseverance to succeed in their learning. One pupil said, 'We don't always get the right answers straight away, so you learn from it.'
- Leaders rightly recognise that the school's 2016 key stage 2 national curriculum test results in reading, writing and mathematics were very disappointing when compared to national averages. Leaders and other staff have acted swiftly to ensure that planning and teaching are now much sharper in order to meet the needs of all pupils more closely. In addition, staff are taking effective action to ensure that pupils are better prepared for national tests. As a result of this sharper focus on higher expectations and better teaching, the progress of pupils currently in the school is good.

Governance of the school

- Governors carry out their duties effectively. They take part in a range of training sessions to further develop their skills and knowledge in governance. They ensure that safeguarding arrangements meet requirements, by checking the school's safeguarding systems effectively to ensure that they are robust and fit for purpose.
- Governors provide appropriate challenge to the headteacher and have a very clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They hold regular meetings with the headteacher to check progress against the actions agreed in the school development plan. In these meetings, governors rightly focus in particular on the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress.
- Governors ensure that the school's pupil premium funding is used well to support disadvantaged pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. The careful monitoring of the progress of disadvantaged pupils shows that, overall, the funding is spent wisely and these pupils are achieving well.
- The school is part of the Milton Keynes Education Trust. The trust supports the school well and offers a wide range of help and advice. The Milton Keynes Education Trust's chief executive officer monitors the school very closely, and has regular meetings with leaders to ensure that the school continues to develop and improve. For example, the trust has introduced a new programme to improve the quality of teaching, which is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Staff are vigilant at all times. There are clear and well-organised systems in place to keep pupils safe. Governors come into school to carry out appropriate checks to ensure that the school's systems meet requirements. Vetting checks carried out on new staff and volunteers are well

organised and rigorous.

- Pupils say that they feel safe and secure in school. Leaders work well with outside agencies to support pupils and their families when required. Staff and parents feel that pupils are safe in school. Pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe when using the internet, both in school and at home. Leaders promote a strong and positive ethos, in which the school's values are promoted consistently.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and they use their good subject knowledge effectively. Much of the teaching is interesting and lively. This helps pupils to concentrate well in their lessons and rise to the challenges that they are given. As a result, most pupils make strong progress.
- Teachers and learning assistants regularly check pupils' understanding. They usually provide skilful support and challenge to pupils who need additional help. For example, in a mathematics lesson, a small group of Year 5 pupils made rapid progress in their understanding of decimals as a result of well-targeted questioning by an adult. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well by learning assistants, so they achieve well.
- Teachers develop pupils' reading, writing, scientific and mathematical skills through some interesting topics, such as 'The Solar System' and 'The Arctic', and appropriate activities. Pupils enjoy presenting their work in engaging ways, including making their own pop-up books.
- The school promotes reading and encourages pupils to read well. The library is at the heart of the school, near the reception area, where classes, groups and individuals read. One class thoroughly enjoyed listening to a story read by their teacher. They concentrated hard and answered questions about the plot and characters in a very enthusiastic and sensible manner.
- Pupils' positive attitudes towards their learning reflect strongly the effective teaching that they receive. For example, in a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils made good use of what they had learned to ask insightful questions, enabling them to make accurate predictions. Consequently, pupils are developing their inquiry skills and this is ensuring that they make strong progress.
- Teachers follow the school's assessment policy consistently and give accurate feedback to pupils on what they need to do to improve their learning. As a result, pupils know their next steps and make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teachers challenge and help pupils to persevere when they encounter difficult concepts. Consequently, most pupils are confident learners, and are able to check and improve their own work. For example, in one Year 5 writing lesson, pupils were engrossed in describing a story setting, using powerful descriptive sentences. However, some pupils, particularly those who have lower prior attainment, do not demonstrate the same confidence in their writing or write as accurately as other pupils.
- A new mathematics scheme has been introduced throughout the school to raise pupils' achievement. Pupils are engaged in their lessons and enjoy the challenges that they are given. Nevertheless, leaders recognise that more needs to be done to ensure that

the teaching of mathematics meets the needs of all pupils. Some pupils who have lower prior attainment do not show that they can use and apply their mathematical skills as well as their classmates.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils relish taking responsibility, for example as a school council member, eco-committee leader or by growing plants in the greenhouse. These opportunities support pupils well and further their personal development to good effect.
- The school's safe, caring and nurturing environment ensures that pupils' well-being needs are met effectively. Pupils feel that bullying is rare and, if it does happen, they say that it is dealt with fairly and effectively. As a result, pupils feel safe at school.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school. For example, in the 'playground circles' that take place after lunchtime, all pupils discuss a range of moral and social issues, led by staff. Pupils are highly engaged and reflective, and show great maturity and respect for each other.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' behaviour around the school is calm and is conducive to good learning. Classes are orderly and pupils respond well to instructions. Most pupils are confident and are proud of their work. They are tolerant, respectful of each other and show positive attitudes. Pupils persevere to complete their learning tasks.
- A few pupils who show some challenging behaviours are supported well by staff. On the occasion when inspectors saw pupils exhibiting poor behaviour, staff dealt with the matter calmly and appropriately. Pupils talk positively about their behaviour at school, recognising, however, that a few pupils need and receive a 'little help'.
- At breaktimes and lunchtimes, pupils play happily together. Staff manage them well across different zones on the playground. Routines are consistently implemented and, as a result, pupils display high standards of behaviour. Pupils are grateful to the school council, who have raised money to buy additional equipment, making playtime more fun, and to support their good behaviour.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. For the past three years, pupils' attendance has been above the national average. Leaders ensure that pupils rarely miss a day of school.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Although in the past, pupils' performance has been below the national average, the very large majority of current pupils in all year groups are now making strong progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Where the progress for any group of pupils is not as strong, individuals are making good progress to catch up with their peers. Teachers

have focused on ensuring that pupils are given more challenging work and time to practise and consolidate their key skills in reading, writing and mathematics. Leaders rightly recognise that the continued focus on improving outcomes for all pupils and sustaining good progress is paramount.

- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making strong progress. Leaders are providing further support so that the differences between outcomes for these pupils and those of all other pupils are diminishing.
- Pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils is used wisely to provide additional teaching, social and emotional support, and enrichment activities. As a result, these pupils are making good progress.
- Most-able pupils are challenged well in order to reach the higher standards, especially in mathematics. Consequently, these pupils are making strong progress.
- Pupils enjoy reading, and the lower prior-attaining pupils make good use of their phonics skills to decode words. The new, guided reading programme is leading to better outcomes for all pupils.
- In mathematics, most current pupils' progress is good. This is because the new systematic approach to teaching number and reasoning skills meets their needs well. Nevertheless, some pupils who have low prior attainment do not currently apply their mathematical skills well enough to make as much progress as their classmates.
- Most pupils are achieving well in writing. Engaging links to interesting topics and the requirement to write at greater length is helping pupils to improve this important skill. However, a few pupils, particularly those who have low prior attainment, are not achieving as well as other pupils because they lack confidence and accuracy.

School details

Unique reference number	139449
Local authority	Milton Keynes
Inspection number	10032883

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Academy
Age range of pupils	7 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	503
Appropriate authority	Academy trust
Chair	Kevin Gowans
Headteacher	Jane Edwards
Telephone number	01908 550811
Website	www.heronsgate.org.uk
Email address	heronsgateschool@yahoo.co.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- This is larger than an average-size primary school. There are four classes in each year group, with five classes in Year 3.
- The school hosts a breakfast club that is organised by an outside provider. In addition, the school provides a nurturing breakfast club to support a small group of pupils.
- The school is a member of the Milton Keynes Education Trust, a multi-academy trust.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set minimum standards for pupils' progress and attainment.
- The school meets the Department for Education's definition of a coasting school based on key stage 2 academic performance results in 2014, 2015 and 2016.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors gathered a wide range of evidence during the inspection, including through observations of teaching, some of which were undertaken jointly with the headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. Inspectors also scrutinised pupils' work from a range of subjects, including English and mathematics, as well as hearing pupils read. Inspectors visited all classrooms as well as observing pupils during an assembly, at breaktimes, and in the music room and library.
- Inspectors met with the school's staff, including the headteacher. Discussions were also held with the chair of governors, teachers, pupils and parents. The lead inspector met with the chief executive officer from Milton Keynes Education Trust.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of documentation relating to the school's work. This included: the school's development plan; leaders' evaluation of the school's effectiveness; leaders' records of checks on teaching and learning; and information about pupils' attainment, progress, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors examined records concerning safeguarding and the governing body's minutes.
- Inspectors analysed the 50 responses and 31 written comments submitted to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, during the inspection. They also considered the 37 responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and 83 responses to Ofsted's online pupil questionnaire.

Inspection team

Darren Aisthorpe, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
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Margaret Wolf	Ofsted Inspector

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