

Wessex Gardens Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131617
Local Authority	Barnet
Inspection number	328622
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Margaret Coussins

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	385
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Jill Summers
Headteacher	Mrs Katie Dawbarn
Date of previous school inspection	7 December 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Wessex Gardens Golders Green London NW11 9RR
Telephone number	020 8455 9572
Fax number	020 8905 5139

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Wessex Gardens is a large primary school. Most of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, most being from Other White, Asian, Black African or other ethnic backgrounds. There are many new arrivals at school throughout different year groups. Around one third of the pupils are refugees or asylum seekers and a similar proportion are at the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language is well above that found nationally. The proportion with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is above average and their needs relate mainly to speech, language and communication and behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. The proportion eligible for free school meals is over double that found nationally. There are 117 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage with 61 attending the Nursery on a part-time basis and the rest taught in two Reception classes. There is an after school club on the school site, which is managed by a private provider. The school has Healthy School and Activemark awards. The headteacher started at the school in September 2008.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Wessex Gardens is a good school. It successfully includes families and children from many different backgrounds, countries, faiths and cultures and this has resulted in a happy working community. The school has a positive ethos in which all pupils feel valued and included. The good pastoral care and welfare develop pupils' confidence and self-esteem and successfully raise pupils' expectations and aspirations. As a result, pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Inspectors were very impressed with pupils' politeness and courtesy at all times and their enthusiasm and willingness to express how much they liked their school and enjoyed their learning. Pupils behave extremely well and feel very safe. The school council is active and a strong voice in the school. Pupils welcome the responsibilities they are given and take their roles very seriously. Links with parents and the community as a whole have been strengthened and everyone shares the aims and values of the school. One parent wrote, 'The communication between me and the school is unbelievably good.' Pupils say they think their school is good and that they enjoy learning. As a result, their attendance has improved steadily over recent years and most attend regularly. There are still a number of families who take children out of school during term time, which means they miss out on important learning.

As a result of good teaching and learning and a stimulating curriculum, pupils reach broadly average standards in English, mathematics and science by the time they leave in Year 6. From their varied starting points, this represents good progress and achievement. By the end of Year 2, standards in mathematics are average. Standards are not quite as good in reading or writing because so many pupils arrive in Year 1 or 2 with little or no English. Although they make good progress, they do not have enough time to catch up by the end of Year 2.

Teaching is good. Most lessons move at a brisk pace and activities are generally well matched to pupils' interests and abilities. On occasion however, teachers expect pupils to sit together for too long before starting their independent work, which slows the pace of their learning. Assessment information is sometimes not used effectively to pitch lessons at the right level to challenge all abilities, particularly the more able.

Leadership and management of the school are good. The headteacher joined a strong team of senior leaders and together they work effectively and successfully to include and value all children and promote mutual respect and strong positive relationships. The headteacher has inspired and motivated staff, pupils and parents with her enthusiasm and determination, shared with all the staff, to provide a good education for all the pupils and overcome the many barriers to learning with which many children are faced. The governing body provides good strategic leadership, supports the school well and holds it to account for its performance. There is a clear evaluation of the work of the school. The strengthened links with the community, other schools and organisations contribute most effectively to pupils' learning and personal skills. Issues from the last inspection have been dealt with successfully and there is a good capacity to improve further. Parents are supportive of all the staff and the headteacher. One parent commented, 'The new head has brought new enthusiasm and openness to the school. The effect has been dramatic and has made the school community, for both staff and pupils, happier and an improved environment for both teaching and learning. The school is a joy to visit.'

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make a good start to their schooling. They settle quickly into routines because they feel safe and welcome. Staff plan tasks and activities that cover all the areas of learning, and children make good progress from starting points that are below average. By the time they enter Year 1 many have reached the expected goals for their learning in their social and physical development. Children have a good awareness of the impact of physical activity on their bodies. One child said, 'You have to run around so that your heart bumps.' As many children are still at the very early stages of learning English their communication, language and literacy skills are exceptionally low when they start and remain below expectations for their age, particularly in writing. The school has worked hard to ensure there is a consistent approach to teaching children to link sounds and letters (phonics) and, as a result, children make good progress and are making gains at a faster pace than previously. However, sometimes opportunities are missed to encourage early writing skills. Staff encourage children's early independence well as seen when children in the Nursery were confidently dressing themselves in outdoor clothing. The curriculum is well planned and provides good opportunity for learning through play in the classrooms and in the outside areas. There is a good balance between activities directed by adults and those where children can make their own choices. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed and parents are pleased with the start their children make at school. One commented, 'My daughter has made good progress. It is lovely to be welcomed into the classroom and encouraged to participate in classroom activities.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.
- Raise expectations of pupils' rate of progress consistently by making more effective use of assessment information when planning lessons.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

When children start at the school in the Early Years Foundation Stage their attainment is below that expected for their ages. The attainment of those who start in later years is often well below average mainly because many are at the very early stages of learning English or they arrive at school from other countries in difficult circumstances. The numbers of children who start and leave the school other than at the usual times has a considerable impact on overall standards. Standards in reading and writing are well below average by the end of Year 2. However, pupils make good progress from their starting points and by the end of Year 6 standards are broadly average in English, mathematics and science. They make good progress because teaching is good and the school has effective systems for including all pupils from different backgrounds and with varying abilities.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' outstanding personal skills, including their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are evident in their outgoing, friendly nature and very positive relationships that contribute to the welcoming and respectful atmosphere in the school. The work the school has

done to gain the Healthy School and Activemark awards means that pupils have an excellent awareness of how to adopt healthy lifestyles. They feel safe and free from bullying, and because of the excellent trusting relationships are confident that they can turn to members of staff should they feel troubled. They enjoy school for the friendships they make as well as for their learning. Because they enjoy being at school so much, attendance has improved considerably over recent years and most attend regularly. Pupils contribute well to the local community through many sports and musical events and the school council has a strong voice in the school. Its members are particularly proud of their work to encourage healthy eating by improving the school lunch menu. With strong, positive attitudes to learning and a highly developed sense of values, pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Lessons are generally engaging, well planned and enjoyed by learners. The best teaching has excellent pace and all learners are challenged to achieve their best. Pupils have excellent attitudes to their learning and appreciate it when teachers make learning fun. On occasion however, pupils' progress is limited because introductions to some lessons are too long, which can slow the pace of learning. In most lessons, teachers use questioning well, encouraging pupils to give extended responses, improving their speaking and listening skills. Assessment data to support learning and inform planning are not yet sufficiently rigorous or consistent across all subjects at classroom level. This means that sometimes expectations are not high enough to provide sufficient challenge to pupils, particularly the more able. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning by supporting individuals and small groups and working closely with teachers to enable the progress of all groups of learners.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is enhanced and enriched with a good range of additional activities including visits and visitors to school, which make a notable contribution to pupils' outstanding personal development and to their learning. There is a good range of popular, well-attended clubs that develop skills in the arts, music and sports as well as providing opportunities to learn new skills such as in yoga and speed stacking. The school has worked successfully to link together different subjects to make learning more meaningful and relevant for pupils. Teachers and pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) very well to support many areas of the curriculum and enhance learning. There are not always enough opportunities for pupils to make the most of their excellent personal skills to learn through problem solving and investigative activities. The curriculum is carefully and sensitively modified and additional support is put in place for vulnerable pupils, those who are learning English and those who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. There are good partnerships with other schools and organisations such as Tottenham Hotspur Football Club.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils are robust and ensure pupils feel happy and safe. Good care and support are based firmly on the values that the school promotes and which are well

understood by pupils and parents. The work of the learning mentor makes a notable impact as pupils with a range of social, emotional and behavioural needs receive good support, enabling them to continue their learning successfully. There are very good systems to support new arrivals to the school, helping them to settle quickly and feel included in all aspects of school life. Through vigilance, attendance continues to improve. There are effective measures to work with families to promote better attendance and the number of children who are taken out of school for holidays has reduced, as has the number of persistent absentees. Good links with community groups promote harmonious relationships between pupils and families from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Marking and feedback to help pupils improve their work lacks consistency across classes and subjects and is not always linked to targets.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The work of the headteacher and senior leaders has brought about improvements in pupils' achievements and their personal skills. All leaders share a commitment to meeting the personal and academic needs and aspirations of every single child and make a good contribution to school improvement. Community cohesion is good because the school works very effectively with parents and its partners in the local community and promotes knowledge, understanding and tolerance of its culturally diverse population. The school also ensures an understanding of the global community, for example through its International Week. Leaders at all levels are supportive of each other, which means that less experienced colleagues benefit from others' skills and expertise. There is a strong emphasis on professional development and staff commented that, as a result, they feel valued and inspired. The school's evaluation of itself is accurate and clear plans are in place to improve the school still further. However, the outcomes of evaluation are not documented clearly to enable sharing with all stakeholders. There is a shared drive to improve standards by working together and keeping the needs of all pupils at the forefront of the school's work, but targets are not challenging enough in Key Stage 1.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

27 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Wessex Gardens Primary School, London, NW11 9RR

I am writing to let you know how much my colleagues and I enjoyed our visit to your school and what we found out. Thank you for making us so welcome, for talking to us about your learning and telling us what you think about your school. We agree with you that yours is a good school and these are the reasons why.

- You are doing well in your learning because teachers make your lessons exciting, you want to learn and you make good progress. You have done really well in writing. We read lots of your interesting writing in lessons and around the school and the quality of your writing has improved in Years 3 to 6. Well done for this.
- You told us that you really enjoy being at school and love all the different things you do. Many more of you are now coming to school every day, which means you do not miss out on important learning. Well done for this too.
- Your behaviour is excellent and it was great to see you get on so well together and help each other at work and play.
- Everyone in the school takes good care of you and helps you all to do your best.
- Your headteacher and all the staff do a good job in running the school and know how to make it even better in the future.

These are the things we have asked your headteacher and teachers to do to make your school even better.

- We want you to reach higher standards in your reading and writing in Years 1 and 2.
- We want your teachers to make sure that they always plan lessons that are just right for everyone and sometimes give you the opportunity to learn new things more quickly.

Some of you who have been at the school for a long time told us how much you think things have changed for the better. This is because you and all the staff have worked hard to make your school an exciting place to be. We were lucky enough to hear your wonderful singing while we were there and we were very impressed. Thank you again for all your help and for being so friendly, polite and interesting to talk to.

Yours faithfully

Margaret Coussins

Lead Inspector