

Inspection of Wessex Gardens Primary School

Wessex Gardens, Golders Green, London NW11 9RR

Inspection dates: 22 and 23 February 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Good

What is it like to attend this school?

Wessex Gardens is a welcoming and caring school. Staff know individual pupils and their families well. Pupils are happy and enjoy attending school. They are kept safe because staff look after them.

Pupils behave well. Classrooms are calm and purposeful. In and around the school, pupils exemplify the school rules by being kind and fair to everyone. Pupils look after each other and enjoy playing with their friends. Incidents of bullying are rare. Staff manage any of these rare incidences swiftly and effectively.

Leaders create opportunities for pupils to develop their interests and talents. For example, pupils attend after-school activities such as gymnastics, football and dance. Staff encourage pupils to take on responsibilities so that they can make a positive contribution to their school and the wider international community. For instance, pupils recently raised money to support those affected by the recent earthquakes in Turkey and Syria.

Leaders want all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to achieve well. However, there are weaknesses in how the curriculum is designed and delivered, including in the early years. As a result, pupils do not learn and remember important ideas in different subjects. They are not as well prepared as they could be for the next stage of their education.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The curriculum is broad and matches the scope of what is expected nationally. Where curriculum design is stronger, pupils learn and remember more. For example, in physical education (PE), pupils develop their passing skills by using large objects, such as beanbags. They then refine this technique when learning to pass tennis and hockey balls accurately. Similarly, in mathematics, children in early years learn to count and use numbers confidently. Older pupils draw on this knowledge to add and subtract fractions with different denominators. However, the curriculum in other subjects has weaknesses in its design. Leaders have not identified with sufficient clarity the important ideas that pupils need to learn and remember in each subject. This means that pupils do not build a secure body of knowledge in different subjects and are not as well prepared as they could be for the next stage of their education.

In a few subjects, teachers do not have sufficient subject knowledge to implement the intended curriculum. They do not typically check how well pupils remember and understand what they have learned. This means that the activities pupils complete are not sufficiently focused on addressing the misconceptions they have. As a result, pupils do not embed important concepts in these subjects.

Leaders have prioritised reading and have ensured that staff are well trained to teach the school's chosen phonics programme. Teachers make sure that pupils read books that match the sounds that they know. If a pupil falls behind, staff provide

additional support so that they can catch up quickly. As a result, pupils develop the phonics knowledge and skills that they need to read accurately and fluently. Pupils read widely and often. They talk with enthusiasm about the stories and poems that they have read to them.

Pupils with SEND are accurately identified. Leaders seek and act on appropriate advice and support from outside agencies. Pupils with SEND access the same curriculum as their peers. However, weaknesses in curriculum design mean that some teachers do not routinely adapt lessons or activities to help these pupils learn and remember important ideas.

Pupils behave well in lessons. They interact respectfully with peers and adults alike. This is because expectations and routines are well established. Effective systems are in place to ensure that pupils attend school regularly and on time. Leaders' work to reduce cases of persistent absence has been particularly successful.

Pupils' wider development is well considered. The curriculum is designed to help pupils to understand the importance of healthy eating and exercise. For example, pupils enjoy the weekly swimming lessons that take place on site. Pupils also participate in several local competitions, providing them with the opportunity to showcase their sporting abilities.

There have been significant changes in leadership and staffing since the previous inspection. Many people are new to their roles. Leaders are drawing on the local authority to provide support and professional development for staff. Teachers and staff, including those in the early stages of their careers, appreciate the support that they receive to manage their workload and well-being.

Leaders and those responsible for governance do not have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. This is because they have not checked sufficiently the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning. As a result, priorities for improvement are not focused on the areas that need to be addressed.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

There is a strong culture of safeguarding at the school. Leaders provide regular training for staff so that they are kept up to date with any national changes. This means that staff are vigilant to different signs of harm and report any concerns that they may have swiftly. Leaders make appropriate referrals to outside agencies. This helps to ensure that pupils and their families receive the support that they need.

The curriculum has been designed to help pupils to understand different ways of staying safe. This includes the importance of healthy relationships and risks that they may face when online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Overall, the curriculum is not sufficiently well designed. Consequently, it does not help pupils to develop a secure body of knowledge in different subjects. Leaders should identify the important ideas that pupils need to learn and remember. These should be sequenced so that pupils revisit, practise and embed these concepts. This will help to ensure that pupils, including those with SEND, are better prepared for the next stage of their education.
- In some subjects, some staff lack sufficient expertise to teach the intended curriculum. This means that support and adaptations made for pupils with SEND are variable. In addition, teachers do not routinely check pupils' understanding and correct errors or misconceptions. Leaders should ensure that staff are adequately trained in different subjects so that all pupils, including those with SEND, are supported to learn and remember more.
- Leaders and those responsible for governance have an overgenerous view of the school's effectiveness. They have not identified the most important areas to improve. Leaders must ensure that they check the impact of the curriculum on pupils' learning to assure themselves that their ambition is being realised. The governing body should also ensure that its members receive sufficient training and support to develop their understanding of the curriculum so that they are able to hold leaders to account for their work.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	131617
Local authority	Barnet
Inspection number	10255376
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	371
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Jill Summers
Headteacher	Alexander Banks
Website	www.wessexgardens.co.uk
Dates of previous inspection	29 and 30 November 2017, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- Since the previous inspection, there has been a change in the leadership structure of the school. All members of the senior leadership team, with the exception of the headteacher and the school business manager, are new to their posts.
- The number of pupils on roll has fallen since the previous inspection.
- Leaders do not use any alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- This was the first routine inspection the school has received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors held discussions with the headteacher, deputy and assistant headteachers and other leaders.

- Inspectors spoke with six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in early reading, mathematics, science, geography, music and PE. For each deep dive, inspectors discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to pupils about their learning and reviewed samples of their work.
- Inspectors considered the curriculum in other areas.
- Inspectors checked the arrangements for keeping pupils safe. They reviewed the single central record of pre-employment checks and reviewed the school's safeguarding documentation. Inspectors talked with pupils, staff and governors about safeguarding.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour in classrooms, during playtimes and lunchtimes and around the school.
- Inspectors looked at a range of documentation provided by school leaders, including their self-evaluation and priorities for improvement.
- The views of pupils, parents, carers and staff were gathered through discussions and by considering their responses to Ofsted's online surveys.

Inspection team

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