

Heyford Park Free School

74 Camp Road, Heyford Park, Upper Heyford, OX25 5HD

Inspection dates 28–29 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected
	This inspection:	Good 2
Leadership and management	Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	Good	2
Quality of teaching	Good	2
Achievement of pupils	Good	2
Early years provision	Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Senior leaders have established a clear vision for the school resulting a highly positive ethos. Leaders are assiduous in seeking out external support and challenge in their quest for the highest standards.
- Governors know the school well and challenge senior leaders robustly.
- Most students make good progress over time. Progress in mathematics and science is particularly strong.
- Most teaching is good and some is inspirational. Students benefit from the high level of expertise and knowledge of many teachers.
- However, the work in students' books does not always reflect pride in their work and is sometimes scruffy.
- Students behave well around the school and in lessons. Their polite and enthusiastic demeanour is a strength and the result of teachers' effective behaviour management. Mutual respect and positive relationships pervade the school.
- The school has effective safeguarding practices. Students feel safe in school.
- Parents and staff are very positive about the school.
- Support for students with special educational needs and disabilities is well led and is helping students make better progress than previously.
- Disadvantaged students achieve as well as their peers, and sometimes better. This is a result of well-targeted support.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Standards in English are not yet as good as those in mathematics and science. Students, particularly boys, do not make as much progress in English as they do in other subjects.
- Provision in the early years requires improvement. Children do not make sufficient progress in Reception class, although it is improving. A lack of leadership in this phase has resulted in a dearth of support for staff. Activities are not planned well enough to help children develop their skills and knowledge in readiness for Year 1.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors carried out 21 lesson observations, three of which were conducted jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed behaviour in lessons and around the school site during walks around the school.
- Inspectors met with senior leaders, governors and middle leaders. In addition, an inspector met with a group of parents informally at the end of the school day.
- Inspectors met with groups of students from each year group and talked to other students in lessons, at break and at lunchtime. Inspectors looked at the work in a wide range of students' books in lessons.
- An inspector held a discussion with a Director of the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance by telephone.
- Inspectors took account of 18 responses to the staff questionnaire and three letters from parents as well as 100 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View.
- Inspectors reviewed a wide range of school documents including the school's self-evaluation document and improvement plan, key policies and the school's central record of staff vetting checks. The school's information about pupils' achievement, behaviour and attendance was scrutinised.

Inspection team

Catherine Anwar, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Christopher Crouch

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Heyford Park Free School opened to pupils in September 2013. This is the first inspection carried out since the school opened.
- The school is an all-through school for pupils aged from four to 19. Currently the school has pupils in Reception class and in Years 1, 2, 7 and 8.
- The school is much smaller than the national average.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for students in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals is half the national average at around one in twelve pupils.
- Fewer than one in ten pupils are from a minority ethnic heritage, a much lower proportion than is the case nationally. Very few pupils currently have a first language other than English.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is similar to the national average.
- The school is a member of the Oxford Teaching Schools Alliance (OTSA). Support is provided to the Principal by a national leader of education (NLE), who is a director of the OTSA and executive headteacher of the Vale Academy Trust.
- The school's early years provision is full time.
- No students attend alternative provision away from the school site.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Ensure that all students, particularly boys, make good progress in English by helping teachers to plan learning that challenges students of all abilities.
- Improve the presentation of students' work in books so that they can take pride in their work.
- Improve the quality of provision and rates of progress in Reception class by ensuring that:
 - leaders give better direction and support to teachers and teaching assistants
 - leaders track children's progress more assiduously so that any shortfalls are identified and addressed quickly.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The school's senior leaders provide a clear vision for the school and have quickly created a very positive ethos. This manifests itself through strong, consistently applied systems for managing behaviour, monitoring students' attendance and rigorously checking the quality of teaching. Teachers share good practice, and, where necessary, are supported to improve. The Principal has high expectations that are clearly recognised by staff and students.
- The Principal has been well supported by a NLE. This has sharpened practice in some areas such as school improvement planning. Membership of OTSA has provided very useful opportunities for leaders and teachers to visit other schools and to use specialist leaders of education for advice and support as the school grows.
- Middle leadership is strong. Leaders fulfil multiple roles as the school grows and carry these out effectively. Leaders create good plans for improvement and demonstrate a keen commitment to achieve the highest standards.
- The system for supporting students with special educational needs or disabilities is good. All students in the school have an individual education plan. Teachers are held to account for addressing the needs and ensuring the good progress of the students in their classes. The leader who coordinates special educational needs provision selects bespoke support for students from a carefully sourced menu of external services. In addition, the school provides high-quality extra help for those students who need it. Teaching assistants are well led and work effectively with students in and out of lessons. As a result, rates of progress made by students with special educational needs and disabilities are improving. One parent commented, 'I cannot praise the school's staff and management enough.'
- School leaders have worked effectively to ensure positive communication with parents. One parent commented that after they had raised some concerns, 'the school very quickly introduced weekly newsletters and experimented with other methods of day-to-day communication.'
- Leaders make effective use of the pupil premium grant to ensure that disadvantaged students make good progress, often better than that of their peers.
- The very positive relationships between all members of the school attest to the work done to encourage mutual respect and equality, and to tackle discrimination of any kind. Students talk about a harmonious atmosphere in the school where bullying is rare and intolerance and name-calling hardly ever happen.
- The curriculum is well balanced because leaders use external services, such as the Oxfordshire County Music Service, to ensure expert provision for students in specialist subjects. Teachers provide good opportunities in lessons for students to consider the social, moral, spiritual and cultural aspects of each subject. For example, in persuasive writing lessons, Year 7 and 8 students considered the moral implications of estate agents over-exaggerating the features of a house they were selling. Leaders and governors recognise the importance of exposing students to a wider cultural diversity. They have put in place visits to a range of places of worship and have planned further appropriate activities. Students are, therefore, increasingly well prepared for life in modern Britain.
- The school's arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective and meet statutory requirements.
- The primary sport premium grant is used well by the school. In part, it supports the school's membership of the North Oxfordshire Schools Sports Partnership, which enables students to participate in a wide range of competitive events. In addition, the grant funds training and development for staff to support the growing in-school physical education provision.
- Although the school does not yet have students above Year 8, leaders have already introduced an element of enterprise education into the curriculum to develop students' skills for future careers. The school is well placed, with a wide range of businesses in the near vicinity, to create a wealth of opportunities for future work experience for students.
- There has been no designated leader for early years over the last few months. Moreover, leaders did not evaluate outcomes from early years robustly enough to highlight the lack of progress made by children in Reception last year. Over-generous external reviews of this provision gave a false sense of security about standards in early years. Rates of progress are now improving. However, a lack of expert direction means that staff are not providing the skilled teaching that children need to catch up quickly to where they should be. Nevertheless, senior leaders now have a clear and well-focused improvement plan for this area, and a new leader is arriving in the school imminently.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Highly committed governors know the school well. They offer robust challenge to senior leaders about

standards and carefully and regularly check how well students are doing.

- Governors monitor the school's robust performance management systems and know how good teaching is rewarded. Governors' regular visits to school means that they are able to check how well policies are being implemented.
- Governors have a good grasp of information about students' progress which is regularly provided by senior leaders. They make sure that information given to them by school leaders is additionally validated by professionals external to the school. Nevertheless, governors have not been sufficiently well informed about weaker standards in early years.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of students is good.
- Students' attendance is good because it is rigorously monitored; they are rarely absent from school.
- Students are cheerful and welcoming. They greet visitors politely and happily express their positive views about all aspects of the school.
- Students report that there is hardly any bullying. If any problems do arise, students comment that 'there are always teachers around' and are confident that issues are resolved quickly.
- Good behaviour is a result of consistently applied sanctions and rewards and the positive ethos of the school. Students feel that teachers manage behaviour fairly, and talk excitedly about the rewards on offer. These range from personal congratulation to school trips. Parents feel that behaviour in the school is good.
- In lessons, most students are generally keen and enthusiastic. This is particularly the case in science lessons where highly skilled teachers inspire students to contribute exuberantly to lessons. In some less engaging classes, some students' behaviour occasionally lacks focus and they drift off-task.
- Work in many students' books does not yet reflect a pride in what they are doing. Presentation is often scruffy, and work is sometimes careless.

Safety

- The school's work to keep students safe and secure is good.
- School leaders' commitment to safeguarding students is reflected in the effective provision and robust processes in place in the school. However, school leaders are sometimes tardy in updating written policies annually and publishing them as required.
- Students feel safe and well cared for, and parents are confident that their children are happy and secure at school.

The quality of teaching is good

- Staff are enthusiastic and have positive relationships with students. Students comment that teachers support them very well and are always there to help with work.
- Lessons are usually well planned and interesting. Teachers engage students so that they are keen to work hard. In the best lessons, teachers use their considerable subject knowledge to inspire students. For example, in a science lesson, the teacher used material from her own doctoral research project to bring the topic of IVF to life. The ensuing discussion showed students reaching a remarkable level of understanding and reflection.
- Teaching assistants support students well. For example, in Reception, children were encouraged to paint butterflies. The teaching assistant, through good questioning, helped them to understand what symmetry is, thus developing the children's numeracy skills.
- In most lessons, teachers' effective questioning ensures that they are clear about what students understand and where they need to improve their work. Students welcome teachers' detailed feedback about their work in books, and respond to it thoughtfully. As a result of this, most students make good progress over time.
- Strong leadership and a well-considered use of external support has resulted in significant improvements in the teaching of mathematics this year. Students' understanding is carefully assessed by teachers who then plan lessons with precision to ensure rapid progress. Student achievement in mathematics is now good.

- Teachers assess students' work accurately and regularly. The school is assiduous in checking the standards of assessment, making good use of specialist leaders of education from the Oxfordshire Teaching Schools Alliance, for example.
- The school is now applying a similar approach to raising standards in English. Teaching is already improving as a result of regular monitoring and coaching from senior leaders.
- Where teaching is less successful, activities are not planned to challenge students of all abilities and teachers' questioning does not probe their understanding deeply enough. In Reception, opportunities are missed to deepen children's learning because staff do not always question them carefully enough about what they are doing. For example, during free play, a group of boys were experimenting with pouring water down a funnel and hose. Their learning was limited because staff did not ask them to describe what was happening, or link the activity to any scientific learning.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- The school's own data show that students in Years 1 and 2 are making good progress from their starting points. The teacher's expertise ensures that early reading skills are developing swiftly and are in line with students of their age nationally.
- In mathematics, all students in Year 1 are on track to meet the standards expected for their age by the end of the year. The majority of students are on course to meet expected standards in reading and writing.
- The very small number of Year 2 students are making good progress from their starting points in mathematics, reading and writing. The school's focus on literacy, strong teaching and the effective use of an external programme has had a positive impact on students' skills in Years 1 and 2.
- The school has not yet evaluated the progress of different groups in the primary phase. The proportion of disadvantaged students and those with special educational needs or disabilities in this phase is extremely small. The school works well with individual students and they are making progress in line with their peers.
- In Year 7, the school's data show that students are achieving well in mathematics and science. The rate of progress in these subjects is better than that made by students nationally over the course of the key stage. In English, students do not make such good progress.
- Boys do not achieve as well as girls in Year 7. Few make progress that is better than expected, although they are catching up in Year 8.
- After a slow start in Year 8, students are now making good progress in mathematics and especially science. Achievement in English is not as strong. The school is using the support of specialist teachers from outside the school in English, and this is starting to have an impact on improving students' rates of progress. The school's assessment of Year 8 students is borne out by work in books and their achievement in lessons. as seen during the inspection.
- Disadvantaged students achieve well at Heyford Park as a result of well-targeted support. In science, disadvantaged students make better progress than their peers. In other subjects, any gaps in achievement are small, and closing.
- Students with disabilities or special educational needs benefit from a range of carefully sourced external support and a well-targeted programme in school. The impact of this can be seen on the improving rate of progress for these students.
- More able students make similar levels of progress to their peers. They achieve well, particularly in science and mathematics. The school's data show a higher proportion than seen nationally are making better than expected progress.
- Children in Reception arrive at Heyford Park with skills that are typical or slightly below those expected for their age. Overall, they do not make good progress. Although the cohort was small, published data from 2014 shows that girls' achievement in particular was much weaker than that seen nationally, although boys made better progress. The school's own data reflect improvements in progress from starting points this year. However, it is unlikely that the children in Reception will reach standards in line with national expectations by the end of the year. School leaders have begun to address this aspect, and a new early years leader, appointed last term, begins work at the school imminently.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- There has been some turbulence in staffing and the school has not had a designated leader of early years

for the last few months although senior leaders maintained an oversight of the early years provision. As a consequence, information about children's previous progress was not accurately evaluated in the autumn term. However, senior leaders have appointed a new leader of early years who will join the school imminently and an appropriate improvement plan is in place to raise standards in this area.

- Provision in the Reception Year is not good because children are not all making sufficient progress to be securely ready for Year 1. In 2014, only half of the girls achieved a good level of development compared to over two-thirds nationally. In literacy and mathematics, children achieved in line with or slightly below their peers nationally. In addition, the proportion of children achieving at least expected levels in understanding the world and in expressive arts and design was well below that seen nationally. This year, school data shows that children are making better progress. However, school leaders accept that rapid and significant gains will need to be made if all children are to reach the standards expected for their age by the end of the term.
- Nevertheless, some children are making good progress. In one lesson, a group of boys showed a high level of social and emotional development and were very imaginative in an extended role-play about a christening. This linked to an activity from the previous day. The boys created a complex imaginary situation which they sustained for an impressive length of time. Excellent learning and emotional support are offered to children with special educational needs, who are catching up well with their peers.
- Staff working in Reception are highly committed and hardworking. However, they have not received clear specialist direction about how to help children make better progress. As a result, activities are not always planned carefully enough to ensure good levels of learning and development. Opportunities to deepen children's knowledge are often missed because staff do not always ask them questions about what they are doing.
- Children in Reception are well behaved, articulate and keen to learn. They show respect for each other and play well, and safely, together. The school's focus on keeping children safe is a well-established priority.
- Parents agree that their children are safe and happy in Reception, and are supportive of the school's work.

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	139998
Local authority	Oxfordshire
Inspection number	450108

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

Type of school	All-through
School category	Academy free school
Age range of pupils	4-19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	171
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Silver
Headteacher	David Castles
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01869238200
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