

Spring Meadow Infant and Nursery School

High Barns, Ely, CB7 4RB

Inspection dates 7–8 November 2013

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and exceptional progress in learning about phonics (letters and the sounds that they make).
- The school's results in the Year 1 check on pupils' knowledge of phonics are well above average.
- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and reach standards that are significantly above the national average overall by the end of Year 2.
- Teaching is good and this enables pupils to make good progress in most lessons.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They have positive attitudes to learning.
- Pupils in the special educational needs resource base make good progress.
- The school is led and managed well. Senior leaders and managers have sustained the good level of achievement and good quality of teaching found at the last inspection.
- The school's evaluation of its own effectiveness is accurate. Leaders and governors are ambitious for the school and keen to move it from good to outstanding.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Teachers do not always challenge more-able children as well as they could in the Early Years Foundation Stage, especially in writing.
- At times, teachers at Key Stage 1 rely too heavily on worksheets, and marking is not as good in mathematics and other subjects as it is in English.
- Teachers do not match writing tasks in topic work closely enough to the levels at which pupils are working in their literacy lessons.
- Some teachers with key responsibilities have taken on their roles quite recently and are developing their leadership skills.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 24 lessons, four jointly with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. They observed assemblies, visited the breakfast club and listened to pupils read in Year 2.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, other leaders, the Chair and Vice Chair of the Governing Body and with a group of pupils. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 47 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and spoke with a number of parents when they dropped their children off at school. They also analysed questionnaires completed by 41 members of staff.
- Inspectors looked at the school's work and at documentation, including the school's self-evaluation, its development plan, and information about pupils' attainment and progress. They also looked at records relating to aspects of behaviour and safeguarding, and at teachers' planning.

Inspection team

Margaret Goodchild, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Rosemary Barnfield	Additional Inspector
Philip Scull	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is much larger than most schools of its type. It has increased in size since the previous inspection with the addition of three extra classes.
- The proportions of pupils of minority ethnic heritage and who speak English as an additional language are average. These pupils mainly come from Eastern Europe.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding (additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals, who are looked after by the local authority and from service families) is average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is below average.
- The proportion of pupils at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is a bit below average.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs for 10 pupils with a range of learning difficulties. Currently, three of these pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set minimum expectations for attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school has a before- and after-school club which is managed by the governing body.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the amount of outstanding teaching and raise pupils' achievement by:
 - making sure that activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage continuously challenge more-able children, especially in writing
 - matching tasks and expectations for pupils' writing in topic work at Key Stage 1 to the levels at which they are working in their literacy lessons
 - making sure that marking in mathematics and other subjects is as good as the best marking in English in showing pupils how to improve their work.
- Strengthen leadership and management and the drive for school improvement by making sure that leaders new to their roles become fully practised in observing teaching and learning.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- When children join the Nursery, their attainment is low compared with that typically found. They make good progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, and they develop early reading skills exceptionally well. Attainment is below average by the time children move up to Year 1.
- The school's results in the Year 1 screening of pupils' phonics knowledge were well above average in 2012 and 2013. Boys and girls did equally well, and most groups of pupils performed much better than similar groups nationally.
- Pupils make good progress at Key Stage 1 and their performance has been significantly above average every year since the previous inspection. This is because the percentage of pupils who have reached the nationally expected level in reading, writing and mathematics has been above average. The proportion of pupils who have reached higher levels has been average.
- Pupils' books show that they cover a substantial amount of work in English and mathematics and their work is of good quality. Pupils at Key Stage 1 apply their phonics knowledge well in their written work as well as in reading. Their positive attitudes to learning are evident in the way they tackle their work and this contributes to the good rate at which they gain new skills.
- Pupils of minority ethnic heritage make similar progress to their classmates. In lessons, pupils who speak English as an additional language make good progress as teachers and teaching assistants place strong emphasis on developing their vocabulary and language skills.
- Pupils in the special educational needs resource base make good progress because they receive a high level of adult attention, with resources and approaches matched well to their needs. Similarly, in the rest of the school, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress when they work in small groups and receive intensive support from skilled teaching assistants.
- Pupils for whom the school receives pupil-premium funding make good progress, and extra support from teaching assistants is helping to narrow the gap between their attainment and that of their classmates especially in reading and mathematics. In 2013, these pupils' performance was just over a term behind that of the rest of the year group in English and mathematics.
- More-able children make good progress in some sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage but there are occasions when they could move on to work that develops their skills and understanding more quickly, especially in writing. More-able pupils generally make good progress at Key Stage 1 and benefit from working in groups that are organised by ability in English and mathematics.
- On occasion, written work that is produced in topic work is not of the same standard as that produced in literacy lessons. This slows pupils' progress.
- Pupils readily participate in physical education lessons and enjoy the activities. They make good progress in developing their physical skills and have a growing understanding of how to improve their performance. They show a good awareness of the effect of sport on their health and well-being.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is nearly always at least good and some is outstanding, especially in the teaching of phonics in the Early Years Foundation Stage. These sessions are planned meticulously to ensure consistency across the four Reception classes and work is matched very closely to the needs of different groups of children so that they all make rapid progress.
- Throughout the school, teachers plan their lessons thoroughly and are clear about what they want pupils to learn. In the best teaching, activities inspire pupils and in nearly all lessons teachers do a great deal to instil in them positive attitudes to learning.
- Most teachers make good use of questioning and of pupils' responses to reinforce and extend their learning. They also provide good opportunities for pupils to talk to each other about their work and to identify how one another's work could be improved.
- Teaching is good in English and mathematics. The organisation of pupils into ability groups for both subjects at Key Stage 1 means that work is usually matched well to pupils' learning needs. Teachers pay good attention to developing pupils' vocabulary and they provide good support for pupils who are learning to speak English as an additional language.
- Teaching assistants play an important part in lessons and provide good support for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. Teaching in the special educational needs resource base is good because activities and approaches are matched well to pupils' needs. Close work with the speech and language therapist increases the skills of teachers and teaching assistants in meeting pupils' needs.
- Teaching is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff keep careful assessment records of children's development and provide them with a variety of interesting activities that span the different areas of learning. In the best sessions, high quality teaching and careful planning provide meaningful learning opportunities. For instance, children were fascinated by being involved in collecting dried leaves and combining them with other materials to build a house for hedgehogs to hibernate, and this activity provided a wealth of learning.
- Not all activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are planned in such depth to develop children's language or thinking skills. In particular, more-able children are sometimes ready to move on to more challenging work but activities are not always matched closely enough to the next steps in their learning. This is especially the case in writing.
- There is some very good practice, especially in literacy lessons, where teachers set individual targets for pupils and revise them from one lesson to another. Marking is generally helpful and informative in English but it provides less guidance to pupils in how to improve in mathematics and other subjects.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Teachers are skilled in managing pupils' behaviour and pupils are quick to respond to reminders about how to behave. Pupils' comments and parents' views confirm that behaviour is typically good.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning and eagerly contribute their ideas in class. They work well together in pairs and groups, and are enthusiastic and motivated. They nearly always apply themselves well and try hard with their work.

- Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have quickly settled in and are familiar with the daily routines. They become readily absorbed in activities and concentrate well, whether playing alone or with other children. They co-operate with one another and show care for each other's feelings.
- Pupils have a good awareness for their age of what bullying is and say that it rarely occurs. They are confident that there is always someone they can talk to if they are worried. Pupils feel safe at school and know how to keep themselves safe. They have learnt, for example, how to stay safe when crossing the road, on bonfire night and know that strangers can be dangerous. Parents who expressed their views feel confident that the school keeps their children safe.
- The before- and after-school club is well organised, it provides a range of activities and good quality care. Pupils are enthusiastic about the experiences provided for them and their behaviour was excellent in the session observed.
- The school has effective systems for promoting and rewarding good behaviour. Records of behavioural incidents are checked by senior leaders but the recording of incidents is not as comprehensive as it could be, making any emerging patterns in behaviour more difficult to identify quickly.
- Most pupils come to school regularly but the attendance rate is lowered by the irregular attendance of a very small minority of pupils. The school is working closely with the education welfare officer to tackle this, and the newly appointed home-school partner is providing support for families where necessary to improve their children's attendance.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher and senior leaders provide good leadership for the school. They have successfully managed the school's expansion while maintaining the good quality of education found at the previous inspection. Morale is high, teamwork is strong and the school has a stable and experienced staff.
- Senior leaders use data well to check on pupils' achievement and to help identify what needs to be improved. The headteacher and deputy headteacher meet with class teachers each term to hold them to account for their pupils' progress, and teachers are now better informed about how well their pupils are doing. This helps to ensure that pupils receive equal opportunities. The school promotes positive relationships between different groups of pupils and tackles discrimination.
- Leaders increasingly use a range of information about teachers' work to judge their effectiveness, including that gained from observing lessons, looking at pupils' work, at teachers' planning and the quality of the learning environment they create in their classrooms. Senior leaders make sure that the most effective teachers are rewarded and they are firm in tackling any underperformance.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is led and managed well by the Nursery and Reception year leaders. They have thorough systems for tracking children's progress and work well in partnership with parents. They are enthusiastic about developing the provision and working towards making it outstanding, including through providing outdoor learning opportunities linked to 'Forest Schools'.

- The special educational needs resource base is managed well. The school as a whole benefits from the knowledge of the specialist teacher and from the part-time services of a speech and language therapist in meeting the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in mainstream classes.
- The Year 1 leader and the literacy and numeracy leaders took over their roles recently. They have made a good start in working to raise achievement in their areas and are undertaking training to develop their leadership skills. However, they are not yet all fully practised in observing teaching and learning and using this to drive improvement.
- The curriculum is matched well to pupils' learning needs and includes themes that span a number of subjects. It is well planned and successfully engages pupils' interest, contributing to their positive attitudes to learning. The curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of special events, clubs, visits and visitors to the school. These contribute effectively to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The primary school sport funding is being used appropriately to develop teachers' skills and extend pupils' learning by bringing in specialist sports coaches, and to forge stronger links with other schools to increase opportunities for competitive sport. Clear plans are in place to make sure developments are long lasting and to check on their effectiveness.
- The school receives 'light touch' support from the local authority in recognition of its effectiveness. Support from the local authority has mainly involved data analysis, joint lesson observation and checking the work of the school by an adviser with the senior leadership team.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body has a number of new members who bring a range of varied skills to their role. An action plan for developing governance and a clear training programme mean new governors are receiving appropriate training to develop their leadership skills. Governors are clear that data shows this is a good school that enables pupils to achieve well. They make sure that pupil-premium funding is spent to raise the achievement of pupils for whom it is intended and are able to talk about the impact this has had. They are clear about how pay increases for teachers are linked to the effect they have on pupils' progress and know how any underperformance is tackled. They have been closely involved in the recent revision of teachers' job descriptions. Individual governors have only recently been linked to subjects and they have begun to visit the school to collect information for themselves. The governing body makes sure statutory requirements are met, including for the safeguarding of pupils.

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	110760
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	425355

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

Type of school	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	440
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nichole Francis
Headteacher	Sheila Sands
Date of previous school inspection	23 October 2008
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