

Cooks Spinney Primary School and Nursery

Cooks Spinney, Harlow, CM20 3BW

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Although many pupils make the progress expected of them, progress in some year groups is not good enough.
- Pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is not as good as their progress in reading.
- The most able pupils do not achieve as well as they could because they are not always challenged with harder work.
- The attainment gap in writing between pupils eligible for the pupil premium and others is not closing as quickly as in reading and mathematics.
- Teachers do not all have high enough expectations of the quantity and quality of the work pupils can produce. Some activities for pupils lack urgency and pupils get little done.
- Teachers do not always give pupils clear guidance on how they can improve their work.
- Teaching assistants are not always deployed well enough.
- The way senior leaders check pupils' progress against the new National Curriculum is not reliable enough.

The school has the following strengths

- The academy is led and managed well. The new senior leadership team has a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve pupils' achievement. In a relatively short time, leaders have begun to improve the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.
- The academy is calm and well ordered. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance has improved significantly. The academy ensures pupils are kept safe.
- Pupils get along well with each other and their behaviour is good.
- Children make good progress in the caring and safe early years department.
- Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are making much better progress than in previous years and standards are rising.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress because they are given effective extra help.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils in all classes engaged in a range of activities in different subjects. In some lessons, inspectors were joined by the headteacher. Inspectors looked at pupils' written work and checked the records of children's learning in the early years.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher, other academy leaders, and the chair of the local advisory board and the chief executive officer of the Burnt Mill Cooperative Academy Trust.
- Inspectors spoke to two groups of pupils and, informally, with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to pupils reading and spoke to them about their reading habits.
- Inspectors examined several of the academy's documents. These included the academy's evaluation of its performance and its improvement plan, notes of meetings of the local advisory board, information about pupils' progress and attainment, evidence about the quality of teaching, and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of the 28 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and the views expressed informally by parents as they arrived at school. The team analysed the 48 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector	Additional Inspector
Sandra Jones	Additional Inspector
Judith Sumner	Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The academy is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group, except in Year 2 where there are three classes. In addition, there are two full-time Reception classes and two part-time Nursery classes.
- The headteacher has been in post since September 2014. Two assistant headteachers took on their roles in April 2015 and two subject leaders have been appointed for September 2015.
- The school became an academy in December 2013, joining the Burnt Mill Cooperative Academy Trust.
- Most pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or children who are looked after by the local authority) is above average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is slightly below average.
- The academy runs a breakfast club.
- The academy meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - pupils have regular opportunities for writing at length
 - pupils eligible for the pupil premium are helped to close the attainment gap in writing between them and their classmates
 - teachers always challenge poor spelling and punctuation
 - pupils have good opportunities to use mathematical vocabulary and to master and remember number facts.
- Improve teaching and achievement, so that progress is consistently good in all years and pupils attain higher standards by ensuring that:
 - teachers always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve by setting suitably challenging tasks and workloads for all groups of pupils, particularly the most able
 - when teachers mark pupils' work they provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve it
 - teachers always make clear to pupils what they expect them to learn in an activity
 - good use is made of all teaching assistants by always deploying them effectively
 - information about pupils' progress in the new National Curriculum is fully reliable.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- The recently formed senior leadership team has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Senior leaders are implementing effective plans to bring about the changes that are needed. They are making significant improvements, for example, raising attendance levels and improving behaviour. Also, they have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement, but understand that there is still some way to go before the quality of teaching is consistently good and pupils achieve well in all year groups.
- Leaders have a relentless focus on improving teaching. Senior leaders collect a wide range of evidence, gathered from looking at the standard of work in pupils' books, data relating to pupils' progress and findings from lesson observations, to evaluate the quality of teaching. The headteacher sets challenging targets for all teachers, including raising pupils' progress and improving their teaching skills. Any underperformance is tackled swiftly.
- A good range of support is available for teachers, particularly through the school's association with the academy trust. For example, lead practitioners across the trust provide training and coaching, and teachers work with colleagues in other schools on research projects to improve their teaching. Teachers new to the profession are supported well. There are good training programmes, and new teachers receive regular feedback on their progress.
- The academy is improving equality of opportunity for all pupils. For example, leaders make certain that disadvantaged pupils can take full advantage of all opportunities that the academy offers and that, through effective spending of the pupil premium, eligible pupils begin to catch up with their classmates especially in reading and mathematics.
- As well as a strong focus on teaching numeracy and literacy, the academy offers a wide range of subjects integrated into topics that interest and engage pupils. 'Wow' days, like 'Romans for a Day', give an exciting start to a topic, and theme weeks, such as 'Music Week', provide memorable activities for pupils. The academy's wildlife area is used very well to extend pupils' understanding of nature and contributes strongly to their spiritual development. A wide range of clubs, trips and other events, such as dramatic artwork on the hall floor illustrating a sink hole, enrich pupils' experiences further. The recent introduction of 'Find Out Friday' enables pupils to practise their mathematical reasoning skills regularly on solving problems. Senior leaders are shouldering the entire responsibility for the development of numeracy and literacy currently, but subject leaders have been appointed to take on these subject leadership roles in the next academic year.
- The academy provides a good range of activities that promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. For example, in lessons and assemblies, pupils learn about other faiths and religions, have opportunities to appreciate music and develop a good understanding of right and wrong. Further events allow pupils to study aspects of other cultures, such as Indian cooking in the 'Around the World' themed week. Pupils learn about their local community through, for example, supporting a local charity for homeless people and visits to a local supermarket.
- Pupils learn about features of modern British society, such as democracy when they voted for members of their student council or studied the recent general election. Together with the academy's focus on the 'Golden Rules' for behaviour and respect for other people, this ensures that the academy provides a calm, safe and purposeful environment.
- The academy uses the primary sports funding effectively to promote greater physical activity for pupils. For example, pupils visit swimming pools within the academy trust regularly, teachers' coaching skills are enhanced through training, and pupils have more clubs and sporting competitions available to them.
- The academy involves parents well. They have good opportunities to see their children's work and to read with them, for example, at achievement assemblies and 'Dads' Mornings'. Parents say they really like the 'Class Dojo' reward system, which promotes good behaviour and enables parents to see how hard their children are working. Regular workshops provide parents with guidance on how they can support their

children's learning. The school's well-run breakfast club is appreciated by parents and gives pupils a good start to the day with a healthy snack, and the opportunity to socialise and engage in educational games.

- Academy leaders ensure that safeguarding training for staff is updated regularly and that the well-thought-out procedures for reporting safeguarding concerns are closely followed. The headteacher, as the designated safeguarding lead, works closely with other safeguarding leads across the academy trust to make sure concerns about pupils' welfare are followed up quickly. The academy's procedures for safeguarding are thoroughly checked by the academy trust.
- With the introduction of the new National Curriculum, leaders are developing a new way to assess and analyse information about pupils' performance. However, it is not yet good enough to provide a reliable picture of the progress pupils are making.

■ The governance of the school:

- The Burnt Mill Cooperative Academy Trust board provides reliable support and management systems for the academy, for example, in financial management and human resources, leaving governors to focus on educational matters. The academy trust works with the academy's local advisory board to determine the strategic direction of the academy.
- Governors gather a wide range of evidence on how well the academy is performing through presentations, reports and their own well-planned visits. Governors are clear about the quality of teaching in the academy and have supported the way the academy has tackled underperformance and brought about improvements in teaching. The academy trust board sets challenging targets for the headteacher to meet.
- Governors have the relevant skills and training to check how well the academy is doing. Generally, they offer an effective balance of support and challenge to the academy leaders, but the new-style information about pupils' progress is not yet as clear as it should be to enable them to challenge the academy as robustly as they could.
- Governors ensure that extra funding to support disadvantaged pupils and to improve pupils' physical fitness is spent effectively and that safeguarding procedures are fully compliant with current legislation.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- The academy's effective behaviour management systems have ensured that behaviour has improved. Pupils are keen to earn 'pips' for their 'Apples of Achievement' and the consequent recognition and rewards for good behaviour. Pupils, parents and staff agree that most pupils behave well.
- Pupils get along well with each other. They conduct themselves sensibly as they move around the academy, being polite and courteous, for example holding open doors for others. Recent arrivals at the academy report that they were warmly welcomed by their new classmates and helped to settle in.
- All pupils appear to have friends and enjoy playtimes, joining in games with others or talking in groups. Pupils report that they feel safe, are well looked after and have an adult they could turn to if they ever felt upset.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They like lessons and listen to their teachers. They settle to work readily and do their best to complete the tasks set. They share resources fairly and listen to their classmates when they are talking. Occasionally, when work is not interesting enough, a few pupils can become restless and lose concentration.
- The number of more serious incidents of misbehaviour is low and they are handled effectively by the academy. Teaching assistants, who help pupils who have difficulty managing their own behaviour, are patient and skilful in their support.

Safety

- The academy's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take. They report that bullying is uncommon and that they are sure teachers would sort it out effectively. Pupils understand the need to avoid offensive language, including racist or homophobic language, and are confident that staff deal with any incidents promptly. Pupils are not afraid to report any examples of mean or discriminatory language to teachers.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and have learned about such things as road and fire safety through visits from police and fire officers.
- The site is secure and visitors are appropriately checked.
- Attendance is improving dramatically and is above average. Absences are followed up thoroughly. The academy makes good use of the academy trust's educational welfare officer to liaise with families to promote regular attendance.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Although academy leaders have worked successfully to improve teaching and eradicate any that is inadequate, teaching is still not consistently good. Teaching is not good enough to raise pupils' achievement in all years and for all groups of pupils.
- Teachers do not always take enough account of the wide range of abilities in their classes when planning activities so that work is too hard for some and too easy for others.
- Teachers do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to write longer pieces or to develop a sound understanding of number facts and mathematical vocabulary. As a result, pupils below Year 6 do not make as much progress in writing and mathematics as they do in reading.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of the amount of work pupils can do or of its quality. For example, too often the most able pupils are given work that is too easy for them. Activities sometimes lack urgency so a few pupils tend to coast and produce less work than they could.
- Teachers do not always explain or model clearly enough what they expect pupils to be able to do following each activity. Sometimes, they do not check how well all pupils are getting on until the end of a lesson, so losing the opportunity to reshape the activity in the light of pupils' progress.
- The effectiveness of teaching assistants is variable and often dependent on how well their support has been planned by the teachers. For example, on occasions, teaching assistants are underused during the introduction to a lesson or when teachers are giving explanations to the whole class.
- Although teachers generally mark pupils' written work regularly, they do not all follow the school's marking policy closely enough. In particular, they do not always provide clear guidance on how pupils can improve their work.
- There are some common strengths in teaching. Teachers have established good relationships with their pupils and manage their classes well. They often use imaginative strategies or link activities to real-life situations to engage pupils; for example, pupils in Year 4 made good progress in working out which coins to use to pay for parking at Stansted Airport.
- Teaching assistants provide good support for disabled pupils or those who have special educational needs. The extra help given is diverse, comprehensive and well planned according to the unique needs of the pupil.

- Phonics is taught well. Teachers pronounce letter sounds accurately and clearly demonstrate how to blend them to make the finished word. Less able pupils in Year 2 made outstanding progress in a short phonics session because the teacher had very good subject knowledge, checked pupils' understanding regularly and quickly reshaped the activity in response.

The achievement of pupils requires improvement

- At the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014, pupils made less progress and reached lower standards in reading, writing and mathematics than the national average. The academy's records show a rapid improvement in the progress made by pupils in Year 6 this year. However, the progress made by pupils in other years is inconsistent and often slower than that made by pupils in Year 6. Many pupils make the progress expected for pupils of their age, but, for example, pupils in Year 3 are not making as rapid progress as pupils in Year 4 in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Apart from in Year 6, pupils are making less progress in writing and mathematics than in reading. Not all pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, and poor punctuation and spelling are not challenged often enough. Pupils are not familiar enough with mathematical vocabulary or with number facts, such as times tables.
- Although the proportion of pupils gaining the higher Levels 3 and 5 in Years 2 and 6 respectively is set to rise this year, the progress made by the most able pupils across the academy is not consistently good. It is better in some classes than in others. Not all of these pupils have enough opportunities to work on harder activities that will really stretch them.
- The academy makes effective use of the pupil premium to help eligible pupils. They are making good progress in reading and mathematics and similar progress to others in writing this year. In reading and mathematics, the attainment gap between them and their classmates is closing, although it persists in writing. In 2014, in reading and mathematics, pupils eligible for pupil premium support were around a term behind others in school, but two and a half terms behind them in writing. The gaps between eligible pupils and others nationally were wider, being four and a half, four, and three and a half in reading, writing and mathematics respectively.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in their learning. They are supported effectively with extra help in class or in individual or small-group sessions. Pupils who speak English as an additional language make similar progress to that of their classmates through well-targeted extra help.
- Most pupils are learning to read well. They have good opportunities to read to an adult at school, and to participate in reading competitions and events. They also make good use of inviting reading areas in most classrooms which contain a good selection of interesting reading material. A few pupils, in the early stages of learning to read, do not read often enough to adults at home. In 2014, the results in the national phonics check at the end of Year 1 were above average.
- Children achieve well in the early years and are well prepared to begin Year 1.
- Academy performance information, confirmed by work seen in pupils' books, shows that pupils in Year 6 and Year 2 are making good progress and their standards of attainment have improved markedly in reading, writing and mathematics.

The early years provision is good

- Children start Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. They make at least expected progress and enter the Reception still below typical levels. Teachers' high expectations ensure children make good progress in Reception. Academy performance information and examples of their achievement seen in their learning records show that the proportion of children reaching a good level of development is much higher, this year.

- The early years department is led and managed well. Home visits are made to all children before they enter Nursery to gather evidence of children's abilities and needs and to aid the settling-in process. Adults maintain a caring atmosphere and ensure children are kept safe. Children quickly develop self-confidence and learn the skills of independence. They are willing to try new things and are very happy in their learning. Children behave well, sharing resources fairly and taking turns.
- The early years environment is a stimulating place for children. Displays cover all areas of learning and are vibrant and eye-catching. For example, an art display of flowers and minibeasts is used effectively to develop children's observational skills and knowledge of numbers, while a display linking the story, *The Hungry Caterpillar*, to the butterfly life cycle, increases their understanding of the world and encourages them to practise fine motor skills.
- Activities are planned, both inside and outside, that build on children's earlier learning well. For example, children have good opportunities to apply their developing skills by using role-play areas, such as the 'café', where they write menus, check the calendar and count. However, expectations of the amount and quality of the most able children's writing are not always high enough.
- Adults effectively compensate for the small size of the outside area by moving children to the school playground to use their trikes and scooters.
- Adults intervene effectively asking questions that encourage conversation and extend children's learning. Adults observe children at play closely and record their achievements well. Although adequate, the records of children's achievement in the Nursery are not as well maintained as those in Reception.

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	140024
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	450314

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	476
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Jackie Keegan
Headteacher	Stuart Pope
Date of previous school inspection	19 September 2013
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