

Summercroft Primary School

Plaw Hatch Close, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 5BJ

Inspection dates

7–8 December 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Outstanding
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The determined and energetic leadership of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher has brought about effective improvement since the previous inspection.
- Middle leaders have contributed well to improving teaching in all subjects. The quality of teaching is good across the school.
- Leaders and governors share an ambitious culture of high standards and want the very best for the pupils.
- Governors know the school well. They have the skills and understanding to challenge leaders to maintain the drive for improvement.
- There is a strong sense of teamwork across the school and the morale of all staff is high.
- Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school and what it does for their children.
- Children in the early years make good progress in all areas of learning. Staff work closely with parents to check and support their children's development.
- In English and mathematics, teachers plan work that challenges and deepens all pupils' learning. However, this is not consistently the case in other subjects. This means that a few of the most able pupils are not achieving the high standards of which they are capable across the curriculum.
- Pupils' behaviour is outstanding. They thoroughly enjoy school and they are eager to do well. They are kind to each other and they show great respect towards each other and adults.
- Pupils have highly positive attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is always exemplary.
- Staff are extremely vigilant in ensuring that pupils are safe and know how to keep themselves safe in and out of school, including online. Consequently, pupils are well cared for and feel very safe.
- Pupils take pride in their learning and are eager to talk about this. Most present their work neatly. Not all pupils who should be consistently joining their handwriting.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - providing more opportunities for all pupils, especially the most able, to consolidate and deepen their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects as well as in English and mathematics, by planning for the development and mastery of skills across the broader curriculum
 - implement a consistent approach to the teaching of handwriting across the school, to ensure that all pupils are joining their writing appropriately to enable them to reach the highest standards in their writing.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, provides determined and highly effective leadership. Leaders and governors have created an ambitious culture of high expectations. Relationships are highly positive across the school. The whole community shares the school's motto of achieving through care, challenge and creativity.
- Leaders and governors have successfully addressed the areas for improvement that were identified in the previous inspection report.
- Senior leaders check the quality of teaching carefully and track its impact on pupils' progress. Checks on teaching are accurate and result in feedback which helps teachers to improve. Clear performance targets are set for teachers and pay progression is linked to these.
- Subject leaders for English and mathematics have contributed well to improved attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. They ensure that teachers plan work that challenges the most able pupils appropriately. Leaders have recognised that this is less consistently evident in other subjects, where all pupils sometimes do the same work. Consequently, some of the most able pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable in other subjects.
- The approach to teaching handwriting across the school is not currently ensuring that all pupils who should be doing so, are joining their handwriting. This is something that the school has identified as a priority for improvement and has started to address.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is threaded through the curriculum and underpins the school's values of honesty, consideration, care and respect. The curriculum is balanced and broad and prepares pupils well for their next steps in learning and for life in modern Britain. There is a specific focus on developing learning powers, skills that support pupils to face challenges calmly, confidently and creatively.
- Engaging themes provide 'hooks into learning' that capture pupils' imaginations and provide interesting topics for them to write about. For example, pupils in Year 6 were learning about the plague and developing their writing skills by describing what it felt like to live at this time. Music and art are given a high profile across the school.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of after-school and lunchtime clubs, involving activities such as recorders, choir, orchestra, chess, French, Spanish, sewing and art. There are also many sporting clubs, including those for netball, football, cricket, dance, tennis, karate and taekwondo. Educational visits and residential trips encourage pupils' interests and enthusiasm for learning.
- In most year groups, there is only a very small number of disadvantaged pupils. Their progress is tracked and carefully checked. Judicious use of pupil premium funding ensures that they receive timely and effective support to ensure that they make good progress.

- The primary physical education (PE) and sport funding is used effectively to ensure that pupils receive good-quality PE teaching and to extend participation in competitive school sport. The school has achieved the School Games Mark at gold level. Specialist teachers have worked alongside class teachers, which has enabled the latter to become more proficient at teaching PE. The school has been successful in a range of sports.
- Parents spoken to during the inspection and the high proportion who responded to Parent View were unanimously supportive of the school. One said, 'It is a brilliant school.' They appreciate the good level of communication and the visibility of senior leaders, including the headteacher.
- Since the previous inspection, the school has benefited from well-targeted challenge and support from the local authority and school improvement partner.

Governance of the school

- Governance has improved considerably since the previous inspection. The governing body has reviewed many of its practices and is now working efficiently and effectively.
- The governing body is well led and managed. Governors are passionate about the school and have ensured that they have the skills to provide effective challenge and support.
- Leaders ensure that governors receive appropriate updates about the quality of teaching. This enables them to support the headteacher's decisions about teachers' pay increases.
- Governors' visits to the school are regular and systematic and focus on the key areas for development identified in the school development plan. They are clear about the steps the school needs to take to improve further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Policies and procedures are up to date and reflect local and national guidance.
- There is a strong culture of care and safety within the school. All staff have received up-to-date training in all aspects of safeguarding, including in prevention of radicalisation. They are very clear about what to do if they have any concerns.
- Effective relationships with other agencies and parents ensure that pupils are kept safe at all times and that their welfare needs are well met.
- Within the curriculum, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel safe and this view is echoed by parents.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching is good and has improved since the previous inspection, when it was found to require improvement. Strong action has been taken to address weaker teaching. Robust systems are in place for senior leaders to check the quality of teaching. Staff receive regular feedback and support when this is needed. New staff are supported well.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and their behaviour. Pupils respond very well to these and all work hard and behave outstandingly well. They have highly positive attitudes towards learning, and work well on their own and in pairs or groups. This contributes to their good learning and progress.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use this to plan interesting lessons that engage pupils' interests. They explain new ideas and concepts well and show pupils how to carry out tasks, so that they have a good understanding of what they need to do to succeed.
- In mathematics, pupils have good opportunities to solve problems, and teachers' skilled questioning supports the development of their reasoning skills. The use of a range of manipulative resources also supports this. Key information is provided to parents to ensure that they understand how mathematics is taught in school, so that they can support their children at home.
- In English, pupils develop their writing skills through activities based on stimulating texts and topics. For example, pupils in Year 3 were writing about mythical beasts, inspired by work around the book 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'.
- The teaching of reading, including phonics, is strong. Pupils read confidently and enjoy reading both at school and at home. Weaker readers use their knowledge of letters and sounds to support their reading and most-able readers read confidently and fluently with good intonation. There are dedicated reading areas in all classrooms and a well-stocked and prominent library, which at the time of the inspection promoted a range of texts related to the Christmas theme.
- Teachers' planning and the activities that they provide for pupils in subjects other than English and mathematics do not always ensure that the most able pupils are challenged to achieve at the level of which they are capable. Leaders recognise this and that more work needs to be done to ensure that all pupils are supported to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding in all aspects of their education.
- Teaching assistants are appropriately deployed and support the learning of individual pupils and groups very well, both in class and in small intervention groups. Consequently, groups of pupils identified for additional support, including the most able, those who have been identified as falling behind and those who are disadvantaged or who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their various starting points because their needs are well met.
- Teachers work within the school marking policy to encourage pupils to correct their own work and offer additional challenges where this is appropriate. Pupils are given time each day to respond to their teacher's comments, which contributes to their good progress.

- Vibrant classroom environments support pupils' learning very well, with useful reminders of how to do things and key vocabulary for the topics they are learning about. Displays celebrate pupils' achievements across the curriculum and inspire their learning.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding. This aspect is at the very heart of the school, underpinned by the key values of honesty, consideration, care and respect, which are embodied by pupils and staff alike.
- Parents who met with inspectors were highly positive about the way their children are cared for at school. They praise the school for being caring and reassuring. They say that their children love coming into school. They are very confident that their children are well cared for. One commented, 'Summercroft is an excellent, friendly, caring school; both our children love coming to school.'
- Pupils treat each other, their teachers and other adults with a high degree of courtesy and respect. They respond very quickly to instructions from staff and are polite and well mannered, always. They hold doors open for adults and each other.
- Pupils are highly confident when speaking to visitors and smile and say hello when greeting them. They say that they are happy at school and very much enjoy their learning, and this is evident in the way that they conduct themselves.
- The curriculum promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural education well and pupils understand different religions. Pupils of different ages and backgrounds get along very well together. The school is a happy and harmonious environment.
- There is a range of opportunities for pupils to take on areas of responsibility, for example as house captains, whose role includes helping younger children at lunchtime, and as play leaders and school sports organisers. They enjoy the opportunity to have their voices heard through the weekly 'Talking Groups'.
- Pupils are unanimous in their views that they feel safe in school. They can recall lessons where they have learned about various aspects of keeping safe, including when using the internet. Online safety is given prominence in every classroom. Pupils are aware of the different forms that bullying can take but say that bullying of any kind is extremely rare. They are confident that if they had any concerns, their teachers would resolve them.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Relationships are excellent, at all times, both between pupils and between pupils and staff. Pupils are highly appreciative of the interesting lessons that their teachers plan for them. The atmosphere in lessons is calm and productive. Around the school and at play and lunchtimes, pupils' conduct is exemplary.

- Pupils take pride in their appearance and their work. They have very positive attitudes to their learning. They listen to their teachers and other adults attentively and work very well in groups and pairs, challenging and supporting each other to develop their thinking.
- Pupils know how to behave. They understand how untoward behaviour is dealt with but say that there is rarely any poor behaviour in lessons or around the school. Parents agree that this is the case.
- Good attendance and punctuality have a high profile in the school and are celebrated. Historically, attendance has been above average. At the time of the inspection, it was in line with the national figure, following a period of higher than usual absence, caused by a sickness bug. Persistent absence has diminished.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Since the previous inspection, outcomes have improved and are now good in reading, writing and mathematics in all key stages. This is because teaching across the school is good.
- Learning gets off to a good start in the early years. Following a dip in 2015, the proportion of children who reached the expected good level of development rose in 2016 and was above the national average.
- Achievement in reading for younger pupils is consistently strong. A well-above-average proportion reached the expected standard in the phonics screening check in 2016 and the preceding two years.
- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above the national average. The proportion that reached a higher level was above the national average for reading and mathematics and in line for writing.
- Overall, this represents good progress for pupils from their starting points at the end of Reception Year. School tracking information and work in books show that pupils currently in Year 2 are on track to reach similar outcomes. This represents very good progress for this cohort, as less than half of them reached the expected standard at the end of their Reception Year. Pupils currently in Year 1 are also making good progress.
- Outcomes at the end of key stage 2 in 2016 were strong. In reading, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected level was above the national average and the proportion who achieved the higher level was in line with the national figure. In writing, a higher than average proportion of pupils achieved at both the expected and higher levels. This was also the case for mathematics, where the school was placed in the top 10%.
- From pupils' varying starting points at the end of key stage 1, these outcomes represent very good progress in all three subjects, which was significantly above average.

- School tracking information and work in pupils' books indicate that pupils currently in Year 6 are on track to maintain these good outcomes and progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Although pupils complete a good amount of work in other subjects such as science, geography and history, their progress is not as consistently strong as in English and mathematics because the tasks set are not always demanding enough, particularly for the most able pupils.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are given well-organised support, whether in lessons or in small groups, to enable them to make good progress from their varying starting points.
- The money the school receives for disadvantaged pupils is used effectively and these pupils also make good progress. However, numbers in most year groups are small.

Early years provision

Good

- The new early years leader has driven improvements in this phase, improving both indoor and outdoor provision and links with parents. Consequently, outcomes have improved and children are now well prepared for Year 1. In 2016 a higher-than-average proportion achieved the expected good level of development.
- The leader is very clear about current strengths and further areas for improvement.
- The proportion of children who start in the early years at a level that is typical for their age varies from year to year, but a significant proportion have knowledge, skills and understanding below that which is typical for their age. The proportion of children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen. A number of children require additional support for their speech and language development.
- Children's progress is tracked closely to identify any who may fall behind. Where this is the case, children benefit from additional and well-targeted support on a daily basis. This ensures that they make good gains in their learning.
- Assessments of what children know and can do are regular and accurate. Staff work together as a team, planning, assessing and recording children's progress in a variety of ways.
- Parents are kept well informed of their child's progress. Learning journeys are always on display for them to see. They are welcomed at any time but particularly on 'Welcome Wednesdays'. Parents spoken to said that they appreciated these and the opportunities to contribute to the 'Wow Wall'.
- Provision both inside and out is rich and stimulating. Children benefit from a forest learning area, which supports all aspects of their learning and development, including their physical skills, creativity and a sense of awe and wonder. During the inspection, children in Nursery Year delighted in playing hide and seek in this area and searching for Santa's elves. Children in Reception Year enjoyed making 'stick men' in this area, linking in with their topic around the book 'Stick Man'.
- Staff are well deployed and have a good understanding of individual children's needs and how to get the best out of them. They ask skilful questions and encourage precision in language, for example in the use of 'full', 'half full' and 'empty' when

exploring capacity.

- A range of self-initiated activities also allows children to develop their skills; however, without a member of staff present, children do not always focus sufficiently on the learning intended to get the best out of these activities.
- Children cooperate, take turns and behave very well, responding to the clearly established routines. A group making Christmas cards showed sustained concentration when working independently.
- There are very few children who are disadvantaged, so meaningful comments about their progress cannot be made.
- Children are kept safe and are well cared for. All staff have undergone relevant checks and training.

School details

Unique reference number	137351
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10019620

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	454
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Michael Kirby
Headteacher	Carole Hinstridge
Telephone number	01279 307477
Website	www.summercroft.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@summercroft.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	11–12 November 2014

Information about this school

- Summercroft Primary School is an academy that is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school complies with Department for Education guidance on what academies should publish.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils is lower than that seen nationally.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is slightly above the national average
- There have been several changes in teaching staff since the previous inspection. This includes at middle leadership level. A new early years leader has also been appointed.

- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum requirements for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed pupils' learning in 26 lessons, across all classes, including 17 jointly with school leaders.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils and school leaders. A telephone conversation took place with the school improvement partner. The lead inspector met with five members of the governing body, including the chair.
- Inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in books, listened to some pupils read and attended an assembly.
- A range of documents was considered, including the school's development plan and self-evaluation, minutes of governing body meetings, records and policies relating to safeguarding, and tracking information about pupils' attendance, progress and attainment.
- Account was taken of 250 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also spoke informally to family members before school and as they arrived to attend a Christmas production. In addition, inspectors considered the free-text responses submitted by parents.

Inspection team

Joan Beale, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Wayne Harris	Ofsted Inspector
Sally Taggart	Ofsted Inspector

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