

Spring Meadow Infant School

High Barns, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB7 4RB

Inspection dates

14–15 November 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- There are too many variations in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in English, across the school.
- Some teachers do not use the information they have about pupils' current skills to set activities that meet pupils' needs or extend their learning. Tasks are not adapted quickly enough within lessons as the needs of pupils change.
- Assessment systems for the broader curriculum are not in place.
- Expectations of leaders in early years are not high enough. Many children, especially those who have special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities and disadvantaged children, are not prepared sufficiently well for key stage 1.
- Sometimes, tasks in early years lack focus. Adults do not intervene well enough to guide children, particularly in developing their reading and writing skills.

The school has the following strengths

- The new headteacher is providing strategic direction. She has clear determination for school improvement and achieving the best possible outcomes for pupils.
- Leaders and governors have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Roles and responsibilities have been established. Staff are accountable for demonstrating the impact of their work in carrying out the school improvement plan successfully.
- Safeguarding is effective. Leaders and governors ensure that the school provides a safe and nurturing environment for pupils.
- Pupils are polite and well behaved. This is an inclusive school where pupils work and play happily and safely together.
- In the SEN resource base, pupils are well supported so that they make good progress from their starting points. They are gradually integrated into the main school to access the curriculum alongside their peers.
- Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school. One parent summed this up by saying: 'This is a friendly school that works hard to build a community. The staff all care greatly about the children and cultivate a wonderful feel to the school'.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects by:
 - ensuring that all pupils, including those who have SEN and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils, make good progress from their starting points
 - improving the use of assessment within lessons so that tasks are adapted more quickly to meet the changing needs of pupils by providing additional support and challenge
 - identifying links between reading and writing so that pupils are able to develop their writing in different ways across the broader curriculum
 - making sure that teachers can accurately assess pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects.
- Improve the early years provision by:
 - raising expectations of what children are expected to do so their learning is always meaningful
 - enabling all children to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding so that they are ready for learning in key stage 1
 - making next steps in learning suitably challenging for all children, particularly in developing their reading and writing skills
 - enabling adults, through their interactions with children, to move learning forward.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since her recent appointment, the headteacher has been unwavering in her determination to secure an excellent standard of education for pupils at Spring Meadow by providing strategic direction. The headteacher and her leadership team have continued to raise expectations, showing ambition for pupils in setting them targets that are more challenging. Relationships between leaders, staff and governors are very positive. The headteacher is held in high regard by staff, who recognise that changes are making the school better and improving outcomes for pupils.
- The local authority has provided good support, particularly to the headteacher, in analysing data. This has supported leaders and governors in having an accurate view of what the school does well and what it needs to do in order to improve. The school development plan is detailed and reflects an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Leaders at all levels carefully monitor actions so that they can measure the impact of planned actions on outcomes for pupils in their learning.
- Staff share the headteacher's vision for school improvement and, with improved outcomes in 2017, leaders have demonstrated their capacity to improve as part of this team. Clear roles and responsibilities have been established within the senior leadership team so that year-group leaders are showing greater consistency in their work. Staff at all levels value the time and investment that have been put into their training. Teachers are being held to account through pupil progress meetings and performance management.
- Leaders have a clear plan for managing pupil premium spending to provide targeted support for disadvantaged pupils, following careful analysis and research into barriers to pupils' learning.
- Tracking systems are being used more effectively to track the progress of individual pupils, particularly those who have SEN and/or disabilities, and to identify their gaps in learning. This process is enabling interventions and activities to be matched to the needs of pupils and their impact to be measured.
- Pupils access a broad and balanced curriculum, which enables them to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding across a range of subjects. However, assessment in the broader curriculum is not as strong. The curriculum provision supports pupils' moral, social and cultural development well and promotes British values. However, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop their spiritual appreciation and understanding. Leaders do not currently have a secure overview of the curriculum to support them in planning greater opportunities for pupils to develop their reading, writing and mathematical skills in other subjects.
- The physical education and sport premium is being used effectively to equip teachers for teaching physical education. Adults teach alongside the sports coach, who provides specialist instruction for a range of sports appropriate to each age group.
- The leader of the SEN resource base works closely with teaching assistants, as well as specialist teachers and outside agencies, to make sure that everyone has the same

chance to succeed.

Governance of the school

- Governors are supportive and committed to the success of the school and its drive for improvement. They have an accurate understanding of the school's strengths and areas still in need of further improvement.
- Governors make regular visits to the school and no longer rely solely on information provided by the headteacher. They work in partnership with the headteacher to monitor the school's actions in addressing key school priorities. They also help to ensure that performance management arrangements lead to improved provision and outcomes for pupils.
- Governors are self-reflective and use a governor competence framework to evaluate their effectiveness in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities. They have identified their training needs and developed their own improvement plan.
- Governors ensure that physical education and sport funding improves the specialist skills of teachers in physical education, supports pupils in adopting healthy lifestyles, and provides increased sporting activities at lunchtime.
- Historically, governors have not challenged the use of other additional funding, such as the pupil premium, to improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. With a tightly focused plan and tracking system in place, they are now able to hold leaders to account for the difference the funding is making to the outcomes of these pupils.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and governors ensure that safeguarding has a high profile with a culture that 'it is your responsibility to report it'.
- The school ensures that appropriate checks are carried out on all adults who work with pupils.
- Staff receive induction and regular training to ensure that they are aware of key policies and procedures relating to safeguarding. All adults know what to do, how to act and whom to tell if they have concerns. They also know how to protect pupils from radicalisation and extremism.
- Leaders and governors are always seeking to improve their practice and, following a recent external health and safety audit, actions have already been taken to address recommendations. They undertake regular health and safety walks of the school site and place actions in order of priority to ensure that the site remains safe at all times.
- Safeguarding is an agenda item at governing body meetings so that leaders and governors fulfil their responsibilities.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement. This is because there is too much variation in the quality of teaching, particularly in English, across the school.
- In English lessons, pupils demonstrate that they have an extensive oral vocabulary. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher inspired pupils by re-telling the story of Little Red Riding Hood using role play and changing her voice to become the character of the woodcutter. The story came alive and pupils were excited to learn. However, in other lessons, teachers do not make links between reading and writing so pupils are not provided with a range of text types as models for their own writing. Extended writing opportunities across a range of subjects are limited.
- In some lessons, tasks are not well matched to pupils' abilities because teachers do not use assessment well enough to inform their planning. Often, pupils receive the same input, irrespective of their ability or need. Within lessons, tasks are not always adapted as the needs of pupils change to provide support and challenge. This limits progress within the lesson, particularly for most- and least-able pupils.
- Teachers provide feedback to pupils in line with the school policy, but pupils are not always aware of the next steps to take to improve the quality of their writing. There are variations in expectations about the quality of handwriting and presentation. This hinders pupils' progress when writing.
- The teaching of phonics is generally effective and pupils respond positively to the school's approach. However, younger pupils are not always challenged within phonics lessons to apply their knowledge to writing in sentences. Pupils enjoy reading both at home and at school, making good use of their phonics skills. Pupils use the school library well, where they enjoy choosing books and making recommendations to their friends.
- Teaching assistants work effectively with groups of pupils. However, in some parts of lessons, teaching assistants are not used to full effect, particularly during the teaching input.
- In mathematics, the school has introduced a step-by-step approach so that pupils are encouraged to 'build it, draw it, write it' and then explain their reasoning verbally. Questioning is used well: for example, a teacher asked probing questions to reinforce different strategies for pupils to use when solving addition problems.
- In mathematics lessons, teachers plan well-structured group tasks often, with different and appropriate levels of challenge. Pupils were observed confidently using a range of resources, sometimes choosing their own. One pupil explained that he was partitioning tens and ones as 'part, part, whole' and then chose a manipulative to explain his reasoning. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning so that they often learn from their own mistakes.
- Staff in the SEN resource base know the pupils well. With the support of specialist teachers, pupils receive the support and encouragement they need to take part in activities matched to their needs. Pupils are gradually integrated into the main school to access the curriculum alongside their peers when they are ready.
- Teachers write weekly newsletters setting home learning challenges for pupils so that pupils can continue to practise their basic skills. Parents are also made aware of what their child is learning and how to support them at home.

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils accept each other as they are and describe how at Spring Meadow, 'all children feel part of our school by being friendly and helpful'. This is an inclusive school where leaders promote equality for all pupils.
- There is a harmonious environment, where pupils work collaboratively at their work and play happily and safely together.
- Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that adults keep them safe as they 'make sure that we don't get lost'. Pupils understand what bullying is and say that if they fall out, which does not happen very often, adults help them so that differences are quickly resolved.
- The school supports pupils in learning how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. They spoke knowledgeably about e-safety and told inspectors that they would never give out any personal information online.
- Pupils get off to a good start to the day through the breakfast club, which provides a healthy, nutritious breakfast. They are well cared for and also enjoy a range of activities in the afterschool club. In physical education lessons, they show a good understanding of how to keep healthy and fit.
- Attendance is well managed and improving as a result of the school's close work with families. This includes pastoral support to reduce persistent absence, particularly for disadvantaged pupils. Both parents and pupils value the support of the home-school partner.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They behave well in lessons and at other times of the school day.
- Pupils take pride in their school, their appearance and the environment.
- Spring Meadow's golden rules include being helpful, truthful, kind and respectful but, most of all, pupils described how they are expected always to try their best. Pupils understand the school rules and know that there are sanctions if they choose to break them.
- Pupils are confident and articulate, showing good manners towards adults and to each other by holding doors open and always saying 'please' and 'thank you'.
- Pupils describe how, 'our teachers are nice and help us if we are stuck on something'. They respond to instructions from adults and show respect as they trust them. However, pupils do not always show sufficient pride in the presentation of their work as adults do not consistently expect high standards or write neatly themselves.
- In lessons, pupils show that they are keen and ready to learn. One pupil said, 'I like challenges because they get harder and our teachers try to catch us out.' Sometimes,

pupils need to be encouraged to be more self-assured learners, particularly when working independently, as they can be too reliant on adult directions in order to begin a task.

- In the SEN resource base, pupils are supported in managing their behaviour so that they can access and complete tasks.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Outcomes require improvement because progress is not consistently strong for all groups of pupils across a wide range of subjects.
- In 2016, at the end of key stage 1, the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards was below average in reading, writing and mathematics. The percentage of pupils attaining greater depth was in line with national averages in writing and mathematics, but below average in reading. When compared with other pupils nationally, pupils who had SEN and/or disabilities and those who were disadvantaged underachieved in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2017, there was an improvement in outcomes at the end of key stage 1 so that the percentage of pupils reaching expected standards was broadly in line with national averages. There was also an increased percentage of pupils attaining greater depth in reading and writing, but not in mathematics. However, expectations have not been high enough, beginning in early years, so pupils have wasted time catching up with basic skills in order to accelerate their progress by the end of key stage 1.
- There are still significant differences between the attainment of groups of pupils, with those who are disadvantaged behind the others in reading and writing. Differences are, however, diminishing in mathematics. The school's own information about how well groups of pupils achieve suggests that all groups of pupils make equal progress. However, observations of teaching and learning in lessons and work in pupils' books reviewed by inspectors show that progress for pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities and those who are disadvantaged is inconsistent. Only the most able disadvantaged pupils are making stronger progress.
- Outcomes in phonics have varied over the last three years. In 2017, the percentage of pupils meeting the expected standard was below average at the end of Year 1 but in line with national averages at the end of Year 2.
- In the SEN resource base, skilled staff plan activities that improve outcomes for pupils so that they achieve well from their starting points.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- The expectations of leaders in early years are not high enough or based on accurate assessments of children's starting points so that children do not make the progress they should.

- In both Nursery and Reception classes, children were observed showing good listening skills and a readiness to learn. However, assessments are not used to identify next steps in learning to inform the planning of activities. Children are often assessed as 'not yet ready' to move on to more challenging tasks. This affects the pace of children's progress during their time in early years, particularly in applying their reading skills to writing.
- Children are generally well behaved, taking turns and sharing. They know how to keep themselves safe and there are no breaches of statutory welfare requirements. In Nursery, children have good self-help skills, for example, in washing their hands. Reception children take responsibility for tidying up by following adults' instructions.
- Tasks are planned across all areas of learning within the early years curriculum. Sometimes, tasks lack focus and are not matched to pupils' needs or suitably challenging for all children. At times, adults do not intervene to guide children in their learning. As a result, some children may move from one activity to another without spending sufficient time to gain fully from the activity.
- Children love the experience of outdoor learning and were observed during a physical education lesson led by the sports coach. They were excited to explore the shapes and movements of fireworks by twisting and turning in response to the music. The lesson ended with children creating a 'bonfire', using their arms and fingers to make 'flames'.
- Leaders are working to engage parents in their child's learning through workshops, and this is having a positive impact. Parents are well informed about their child's progress through their end-of-year report. However, some parents would like information about their child's next steps in learning so that they can support them at home. Parents spoke positively about how their children have settled into school. One parent said, 'My child is extremely happy at this school. He is well supported and loves going to school.'

School details

Unique reference number	110760
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10037631

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 to 7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	348
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Susanne Jessop
Headteacher	Annette Blewett
Telephone number	01353 664742
Website	www.springmeadowschool.cambs.sch.uk
Email address	head@springmeadow.cambs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	7–8 November 2013

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized infant school and has Nursery provision.
- A new headteacher has been appointed, taking up her post in September 2017.
- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school offers a breakfast and after-school club.
- Almost three quarters of pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds and who speak English as an additional language is average.
- The proportion of pupils who have SEN and/or disabilities is lower than that found in most schools. However, the proportion of pupils who have an education, health and care plan is similar to other schools nationally.
- The school has specially resourced provision for up to 10 pupils who have SEN, with a

range of learning difficulties.

- A smaller than average proportion of pupils are disadvantaged and supported by the pupil premium.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in all classrooms, including observations carried out jointly with the headteacher. In addition, inspectors made short visits to observe learning at other times, to observe small groups of pupils being taught and to review the teaching of phonics. Inspectors also considered the broader curriculum, including how the school promotes aspects of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and British values. Inspectors reviewed provision for pupils attending the school's breakfast and after-school club as well as the provision in the specially resourced provision.
- The inspectors looked at pupils' work from all year groups in different subjects, both within lessons and through a joint work scrutiny with leaders, to see what progress pupils make and how well the school's marking policy is being applied.
- Meetings were held with pupils to discuss their learning and gather their views about the school, behaviour and safety. The inspectors listened to pupils read in Years 1 and 2, and discussed their reading with them.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher and other members of staff with leadership responsibility. Discussions were held with a representative from the local authority and members of the governing body.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of documents including: the school development plan; information about pupils' learning and progress; planning and monitoring documents; and the school's own checks on the quality of teaching.
- Inspectors reviewed safeguarding policies and procedures, including records of checks on the suitability of staff and adults, and behaviour and attendance records.
- Inspectors took account of the 51 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View, the school's evaluation of its recent survey for parents and carers, and other communications received, including speaking to parents and carers at the start of the second day of the inspection. In addition, inspectors took account of the 39 responses to a questionnaire for members of staff and two responses to a questionnaire for pupils.

Inspection team

Pauline MacMillan, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Liz Hackett	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Hughes	Ofsted Inspector

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