

Spurcroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109937
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	356656
Inspection dates	20–21 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Graham Lee

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	351
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Seward
Headteacher	Bealah Letchford
Date of previous school inspection	6 February 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. 22 lessons were seen, taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, governors and members of the leadership team. They observed the school's work and looked at school documentation including the development plan, information about pupils' progress, and policies and procedures in relation to the safeguarding of children. Inspectors also considered the views of pupils, staff and 130 parents and carers expressed in their responses to the questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at a number of key areas:

- the extent to which pupils are doing better in English than mathematics and the reason why, if that is the case
- the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the degree to which these pupils are doing better in Key Stage 1 than Key Stage 2
- the extent to which girls in the school are making better progress than boys and the reasons why, if that is the case
- the extent to which pupils feel safe, especially on the playground.

Information about the school

This is a larger-than-average primary school where the vast majority of pupils are of White British origin. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average. Most of these have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems. There are significantly more boys than girls in the school. Following the departure of the previous headteacher at the end of the autumn term, the school is being led by an acting headteacher during the current term. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed for the beginning of the summer term. The school has won a number of awards, including the Activemark and Healthy Schools status. The school offers before- and after-school clubs for its pupils. This provision is run by a private organisation and was not part of this inspection.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

2

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

2

Main findings

Spurcroft Primary is a good school. Satisfactory at its last inspection, school leaders have worked very effectively with staff to improve teaching and learning. As a consequence, pupils' progress has accelerated, particularly over the last year, and their academic achievement is now good. The school takes very good care of its pupils and arrangements for their safeguarding are exemplary. As a result, pupils feel safe and secure and most enjoy everything that school has to offer. This is reflected in their above average attendance and good behaviour. The school engages productively with most parents and carers, who recognise its strengths. One commented, 'The school has a very positive feel and I am very happy with all the staff who make the school such a success.' This was typical of the views of others.

Children make a good start to school life in the warm and welcoming environment of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In recent years, pupils have made better progress in English than in mathematics as they move through the school. As a result of a successful emphasis on developing mathematics, progress is improving and pupils are now making good progress in both subjects. Pupils' attainment at the end of Year 6 is broadly average. It is higher than it was at the last inspection and is rising in mathematics.

A major factor in pupils' improving progress is good teaching. Teachers have very good relationships with their classes and use a range of strategies, including information and communication technology (ICT), effectively to engage and motivate learners. In many respects, the curriculum is innovative and tailored well to the needs of the pupils. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 enjoyed designing and making waterproof 'Stone Age' shelters. This topic was particularly exciting for the boys and helps to illustrate why carefully chosen subject matter is enabling the many boys to achieve as well as girls. Teachers generally plan well to meet the varying needs of pupils, although in a few lessons the level is not quite right and, as a consequence, there is insufficient challenge for some groups of pupils, particularly the more-able.

Another important element in pupils' accelerating progress is the increasingly effective use of data to track the performance of individuals and groups of learners. This is enabling leaders to identify potential underachievement at an early stage and to ensure that pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school. This is not yet firmly embedded, however, and a few inconsistencies between subjects and classes remain. Teachers use a range of strategies to assess how well pupils are doing. There are some good examples of target setting and marking, although they are not used consistently well to enable all pupils to move on to the next steps in their learning.

Most pupils are proud of their school and make an excellent contribution to its development, for example as school councillors and members of the pupil leadership team. They believe that their views are taken into account, for instance in the recent

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appointment of the new headteacher. They also play a prominent role in the wider community, for instance through the Thatcham Youth Council. All of these activities contribute to pupils' good social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. ♦♦♦♦

The school has considerably strengthened leadership at all levels since the last inspection and this has helped ensure a seamless transition between headteachers. The curriculum teams are influential and play an important role in motivating staff and improving provision in their areas. Leaders and the effective governing body have an accurate and realistic view of the school's strengths and weaknesses, based on a rigorous analysis of its performance, and address the latter effectively, for example in writing and mathematics in recent years. This, together with the school's improvement since the last inspection, is indicative of its good capacity to continue to improve under its capable leadership team and new headteacher.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all is good and an increasing proportion outstanding by July 2012 in order to raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics through:
 - ensuring that pupils are consistently challenged to do as well as they can, particularly the more-able
 - ensuring that target setting and teachers' marking always help pupils to move on to the next steps in the learning.
- Embed assessment and tracking systems to ensure that pupils make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics from year to year.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**2**

The majority of pupils told inspectors that they enjoyed school and this was evident in most lessons, where they applied themselves diligently and were keen to learn. Mostly, they responded thoughtfully to their teachers' questions and cooperated well in pairs and groups when required to do so, for example in 'Big Maths' sessions in Year 3 and 4, when pupils worked well in groups to solve problems related to weighing. They responded well to the challenges they were presented with and made good progress. This is one reason why pupils' progress is accelerating in mathematics and why they are now doing as well as they are in English. Boys are making as much progress as girls and, in particular, strategies to encourage them to write have been very successful. In a lesson in Year 5 and 6, for example, boys, as well as girls, were inspired to write some high-quality descriptions of a market place because the teacher had captured their imagination.

Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are supported well in class and in small groups. This gives them confidence and enables them to make as much progress as their peers. A focus on these pupils in Key Stage 2 has accelerated their progress and they are now doing as well as those with similar needs in Key Stage 1. Most pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. A few pupils with emotional and behavioural problems are generally enabled to cope well in class and learning is seldom disrupted. ♦ Occasionally, pupils' motivation dips when the work is not stimulating or challenging enough and progress slows as a result, particularly for the most able.

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Pupils say that they feel safe in school and that they are confident that any issues will be dealt with by the adults. The concerns of a few pupils about boisterous play at break times, for example, have been largely resolved and inspectors found playtimes to be happy and purposeful. Pupils' good uptake of the many sports activities on offer and understanding of the importance of a nutritious diet helps them to adopt healthy lifestyles well. These factors are recognised in their national awards. Pupils' involvement in all aspects of school life is substantial and members of the school council are clear, for example, that they are 'issues sorters'! Pupils also raise money for charities and are increasingly involved in the local community, for example through a community cohesion project looking at what it meant to live in Thatcham. Pupils positive attitudes to learning, good attendance and improving academic achievement mean that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	3
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	2
Pupils' behaviour	2
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	1
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

How effective is the provision?

The school's good care of its pupils enables all groups to make the most of the opportunities provided by the school. This is illustrated by the effective support provided for pupils in vulnerable circumstances. There are examples of how this support has led to improvements in behaviour and attendance in individual cases. Support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well focused and enables them to do well, although improvements are quite recent in Key Stage 2. The school also supports its

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pupils well at times of transition and enables them to move on to the next stage of their education with confidence. The monitoring of attendance and behaviour is effective in securing good outcomes for the pupils, although the latter remains an issue for a number of parents and carers.

The great majority of teaching is securing good and improving progress for learners. Teachers have strong subject knowledge and adapt the curriculum well to the needs of pupils. For example, they have been successful in increasing pupils' motivation to write, particularly boys, by careful consideration of the context for writing. A similar approach is being used in mathematics, which is leading to improving progress for pupils. In one mathematics lesson in Year 5 and 6, more-able pupils enjoyed the challenges of solving a range of complex real-life problems using calculators and their knowledge of place value. In a few lessons, this level of challenge is not quite as successful for all learners and, as a consequence, more-able pupils in particular do not make as much progress as they might. Teachers set targets for pupils, but not all are aware of them and some are unclear about how they help them to make progress. Similarly, marking is regular and supportive, but does not always give pupils a clear idea of how to improve their work. ♦♦♦♦

The curriculum is becoming more creative and exciting as the school links different subjects together to help pupils see how the different facets of their learning fit together. Careful account has been taken of issues such as diversity, sustainability, enterprise and the local community. The school has also sought to involve parents and carers, through, for example, the successful involvement of male family members helping to build bridges for a technology competition. ♦ This remains at an early stage of development and its impact on improving attainment is yet to be fully realised. The curriculum is considerably enriched through a range of clubs, visits and visitors.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	2
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	2

How effective are leadership and management?

The acting headteacher and deputy work very effectively with leaders at all levels to communicate high expectations and ambitious plans for the school. Together, they have galvanised the support of an enthusiastic and committed staff team and a culture of continuous improvement is evident in all the school's work. A range of coaching and mentoring activities, together with rigorous monitoring, has led to improvements in teaching and learning and, in turn, accelerated progress for pupils. Data about the performance of individuals and groups are being used more robustly to hold teachers to account for the progress of pupils, although this has not yet led to consistently good

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progress in every subject in each class. ♦ The governing body has an influential role in the strategic development of the school and offers a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders.

There is a comprehensive understanding of issues related to safeguarding by the governing body and staff at all levels. It is given the highest priority, which is evident from the moment a visitor walks through the door, and permeates all aspects of school life. The school has high-quality risk assessment and monitoring systems and constantly reviews its practices. The school is equally committed to promoting equality of opportunity and eradicating discrimination. It monitors the progress of different groups of pupils closely. As a result, there are no significant differences in the progress of different groups, although higher attaining pupils are occasionally insufficiently challenged. The school is a harmonious place and leaders promote community cohesion well. This drive is particularly strong at the local level and the school has begun to implement its plans to extend it at the national and global levels.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	2
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	2
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	2
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	2
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	2
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	2

Early Years Foundation Stage

Children make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in communication and language development, where their skills are often underdeveloped on entry. By the time they enter Year 1, their attainment is broadly average, although a substantial minority are doing better. The positive start in the Nursery is a contributory factor in children's good progress, because very positive relationships are established with parents and carers. ♦ Strong relationships are developed with the adults working in both the Nursery and Reception classes. As a result, children behave well and treat each other with respect and consideration. ♦ Provision for welfare and safety is good. Children learn

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about safer and healthier lifestyles as they enjoy nutritious snacks and various physical activities.

The curriculum develops children's skills effectively in all areas of their learning, with many opportunities for imaginative and structured play, both in and out of the classroom. Sometimes, opportunities are missed for children to initiate their own learning and to become even more independent. Exciting opportunities to enhance children's language development are provided in the outdoor reading and writing areas where one child, who was reading a book, whilst wrapped in a blanket, commented, 'This is so cosy.' ♦ Good teaching ensures that regular assessment is thorough and accurate, so that effective tracking of progress helps to plan for the next steps in children's learning. ♦ Adults guide activities with subtle expertise, but sometimes children lose interest when an activity is allowed to go on for too long without adult intervention. Learning Journals demonstrate parents' and carers' active involvement in their children's learning and their appreciation of how well adults know their child. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and this results in a purposeful, evaluative and committed team.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	2

Views of parents and carers

A very large majority of parents and carers responding to the questionnaire were very supportive of the school. Almost all agreed or strongly agreed that their children were happy, healthy and safe at school and that the quality of teaching is good. The vast majority are happy with their children's overall experience of the school. A number added positive comments to support their views. One parent wrote, 'How wonderful it is to see the children arriving at the school in the morning eager to learn.' This was typical of many.

A few parents and carers indicated that they did not feel that the school deals effectively with behavioural and bullying issues. Inspectors found behaviour to be good and that it is managed well. The school recognises there is more to do to make sure that all parents and carers are confident in these systems. A few also indicated concerns about communications and the way the school engages them in their children's learning. Inspectors found that the school communicates well with parents and carers and does a lot to help them support their children's learning through, for example, innovative activities such as 'midnight maths'.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Spurcroft Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 130 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 351 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	61	47	67	52	1	1	1	1
The school keeps my child safe	63	49	65	50	1	1	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	29	22	90	69	9	7	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	42	32	72	55	11	8	2	2
The teaching is good at this school	48	37	75	58	5	4	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	32	25	88	68	7	5	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	41	32	84	65	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	44	34	75	58	4	3	1	1
The school meets my child's particular needs	42	33	71	55	9	7	2	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	24	18	80	62	19	15	2	2
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	26	20	85	65	11	8	1	1
The school is led and managed effectively	30	23	85	65	10	8	2	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	46	35	77	59	2	2	2	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	59	35	3	3
Primary schools	9	44	39	7
Secondary schools	13	36	41	11
Sixth forms	15	39	43	3
Special schools	35	43	17	5
Pupil referral units	21	42	29	9
All schools	13	43	37	8

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2010 and are consistent with the latest published official statistics about maintained school inspection outcomes (see www.ofsted.gov.uk).

The sample of schools inspected during 2009/10 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100.

Sixth form figures reflect the judgements made for the overall effectiveness of the sixth form in secondary schools, special schools and pupil referral units.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



24 January 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Spurcroft Primary School, Thatcham RG19 3XX

You may remember that I visited your school recently with two other inspectors. I thank you all for being so friendly and welcoming. I thought you would like to know what we found out.

You go to a good school. Many of you told us how much you enjoy school, and most of your parents and carers agreed. Everybody at the school looks after you very well and you told us that you feel very safe. We were impressed with your good behaviour in lessons and around the school. Well done! We also found that you take your many responsibilities very seriously and that you make a major contribution to the development of the school. Some of you were even involved in the appointment of the new headteacher.

Your teachers work hard to make lessons interesting for you and are making improvements all the time, especially in mathematics. This is helping you to make good progress in English and mathematics. By the time you leave, your attainment is similar to that found in most schools and is improving and you are well prepared for secondary education.

All the leaders in the school and the governing body are doing a good job and they get lots of help from all the staff. This is making sure that the school is continuing to run well before your new headteacher arrives. They are keen to make the school even better for you. We have asked them to do a couple of things that will help.

- In a few lessons, the work is a little bit too easy, especially for some of you who find learning easier. We have asked the teachers to make sure that your work is always at the right level to help you to make good progress. We have also asked them to make sure that you understand your targets and that marking helps you to improve your work.
- Your teachers collect lots of information about how well you are doing. We have asked them to make sure that they always use this information to help you to make good progress.

Wishing you every success in the future

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee

Lead inspector

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