

Spring Brook School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	133368
Local Authority	Oldham
Inspection number	360499
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Marian Thomas

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

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	5–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	27
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Margaret Ramsbottom
Headteacher	Mrs Janet Jones
Date of previous school inspection	10 January 2008
School address	Heron Street Oldham Lancashire OL8 4JD
Telephone number	0161 911 5007
Fax number	0161 911 5008
Email address	janet.j@springbrook.oldham.sch.uk

Age group	5–11
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2011
Inspection number	360499

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the documentation in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 4234

Textphone: 0161 618 8524

E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2011

Introduction

his inspection was carried out by one additional inspector. The inspector observed eight lessons taught by seven teachers. Meetings were held with groups of pupils, members of the governing body, teaching staff and the headteacher of the school as well as senior leaders from two partnership schools. The inspector observed the work of the school and looked at teachers' planning for lessons, school leaders' development plans and samples of pupils' work. The inspector also took into account the views of 19 parents and carers who returned inspection questionnaires.

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

- The progress made by all pupils.
- The attendance of pupils.
- The health, safety and welfare documents produced by the school.
- The work of the governing body.

Information about the school

Spring Brook School is smaller than most special schools. It provides for pupils who have emotional, social and behavioural difficulties. The vast majority of pupils are boys. A significant number of pupils join the school midway through the academic year. The school also provides an outreach service which supports the needs of primary pupils with identified emotional, social and behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools across the borough. Approximately 80% of the pupils who currently attend the school have a statement of special educational needs. The remaining pupils are undergoing assessment to identify their level of need. The majority are of White British heritage with a small number coming from different minority ethnic groups. A small percentage of pupils are looked after by the local authority. Approximately two thirds of current pupils are known to be entitled to free school meals. The school is co-located with a mainstream primary school in a purpose built building. The school has attained Healthy School status.

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?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Spring Brook is an outstanding school which well deserves its excellent reputation with parents and the community. Parents and carers views are reflected in the typical comment: 'This school is fantastic. My child has come on in leaps and bounds and now enjoys rather than hates coming to school.'

The headteacher and senior leaders have exceptionally high expectations of what pupils can achieve and support staff in the delivery of high-quality provision. Self-evaluation of the school's effectiveness is accurate and rigorous, and the findings are acted on to outstanding effect. The school is excellent at supporting pupils' challenging emotional and behavioural needs and, as a result, the significant barriers to learning that all pupils have, are minimised. Since the last inspection, the school has made outstanding progress in many areas. For example, the school has introduced a highly effective system for tracking pupils' small steps of progress. This data are also now used to compare pupils' progress with others with similar difficulties. The school has also attained Healthy School status and developed a new and exciting curriculum which offers pupils some very rich learning opportunities. These improvements demonstrate an excellent capacity to improve further.

Pupils make outstanding progress in their personal development and grow in confidence as they move through school. This is the result of excellent care, guidance and support which give pupils' welfare the highest priority. Pupils thoroughly enjoy school and understand how to stay healthy. Behaviour is excellent and pupils feel exceptionally safe because of excellent safeguarding procedures. Excellent transition arrangements ensure pupils are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education and life.

Outstanding teaching is based on thorough and reliable assessment of pupils' learning needs. As a result, pupils' overall progress is excellent. However, currently pupils are making slightly faster progress in mathematics, science and reading than in writing. Although the school recognises this, and has introduced more opportunities for pupils to extend their writing, the impact of these new strategies has yet to be felt. Teaching assistants provide excellent support in lessons so all are fully involved. The exceptional curriculum has continued to improve since the last inspection with new partnerships further enriching learning. Attendance is excellent. This reflects pupils' enjoyment of school, and the excellent relationships school staff have with pupils and their families.

The governing body monitors most aspects of the school's work well and has recently improved its role in holding senior managers to account for provision in school. The impact of these changes is yet to be evaluated. Through its work with schools in the local community and abroad, the school has ensured pupils have an excellent understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society.

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

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' attainment by ensuring pupils have sufficient opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing.
- By the end of this current academic year, evaluate the impact of the school's new system for ensuring governors hold school leaders to account.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

When pupils join the school, the levels at which they are working are typically very much lower than those expected for their age. Pupils also often need to develop the skills needed for good learning, such as sitting down and listening. Although overall attainment is still lower than average by the end of Year 6, the majority of pupils have made excellent progress from their individual starting points and display excellent skills for learning. As a result, the majority make highly successful transitions to mainstream secondary schools.

Pupils settle quickly and respond positively to their individual learning programmes. These enable pupils to work consistently and achieve well. Evidence of their improved attitudes and achievement could clearly be seen in an outstanding literacy lesson where pupils studied how to develop a character within a piece of writing. The levels of concentration shown by pupils throughout the activity were exceptional and resulted in some excellent work. Evaluation of each other's work at the end of the lesson showed an excellent level of empathy and understanding of the task. Considering the starting points of the majority of these pupils and their high level of social and emotional need, this showed remarkable progress and enthusiasm for learning.

All groups of pupils, including those who are looked after by the local authority, make excellent progress overall. This is because learning environments are specifically designed to meet their needs and staff have exceptionally high expectations. Pupils' progress in writing is slightly slower than in other subject areas. This has been recognised by the staff who have very recently begun to increase opportunities for pupils to write in different ways across the curriculum. However, the impact of this strategy has yet to be measured.

Pupils feel exceptionally safe because they know staff are supportive and help them at all times. They clearly enjoy school. A typical comment is that: 'This school is brilliant'. The majority of pupils recognise the importance of making healthy food choices, for example, choosing fruit to eat at snack time and they have an excellent understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. Pupils enjoy the many different physical activities offered through school clubs and outdoor activities and appreciate the part this plays in a healthy lifestyle. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the community both within and outside school by listening to and appreciating the needs of others. For example, pupils have recently worked alongside the local community growing prize-winning vegetables on community allotments. Pupils' impressive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is seen in the way in which they react to each other and take excellent care of the school and surrounding environment.

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

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	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	1
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	1
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
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	1
Taking into account: Pupils' attendance ¹	1
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

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?

Teachers use assessment information highly effectively to set ambitious targets for pupils. Information and communication technology is used exceptionally well to support pupils' learning and promote their independence. Lesson planning is extremely thorough and great attention is given to ensuring work is modified to meet the different needs of pupils. Marking of pupils' work ensures they are aware of what is needed to improve. Support staff are well trained and work very closely with teachers to support pupils' learning very effectively.

The curriculum is exceptionally well organised and is highly personalised to meet the needs of individual learners. It is imaginatively enhanced by many visits and activities away from the classroom. Educational visits help develop pupils' independence. A recent residential trip to an outdoor pursuits centre helped to develop pupils' team building skills as well as offering pupils a range of outdoor experiences. One pupil described this as: 'Very muddy, but the best time I have ever had'.

As a result of the excellent quality of care, guidance and support, pupils and their families feel there is always someone who will listen and help. A careful and thorough assessment is undertaken when pupils arrive at the school which is then used to target support effectively. Pupils who are vulnerable due to their circumstances are exceptionally well supported and this is helped by the excellent links with many outside agencies. Attendance has remained well above national averages for the last three years because of

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

the many and varied strategies the school has in place to support pupils' attendance. Pupils and parents are highly appreciative of the support given by the school to ensuring pupils arrive on time and ready for learning. Transition arrangements are securely in place and pupils are exceptionally well prepared for moving to the next phase in their education. This is clearly evidenced by the large proportion of pupils who successfully transfer to the mainstream secondary school of their choice.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	1
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	1
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The visionary leadership of the headteacher and senior leaders is moving the school forward exceptionally well and ensuring excellent outcomes for pupils. This, coupled with exciting partnerships forged with outside agencies, is most effectively driving improvement further. The governing body provides good management overall and has implemented very high-quality procedures to ensure the health and well-being of all pupils. They offer a good level of support to the school and challenge to senior leaders in many aspects of the school's work. The impact of recent changes to improve the structure of the governing body by developing clear roles and responsibilities especially linked to becoming more challenging has yet to be evaluated. Robust procedures ensure all safeguarding requirements are met and that practice is of an excellent standard. The strength and quality of these procedures mean that safeguarding issues are dealt with effectively by senior leaders. Leaders and managers have ensured that the school is a highly inclusive community. Systems to promote equality of opportunity and tackle discrimination within school are excellent. No stone is left unturned to help pupils overcome barriers to their learning and to ensure they make as much progress as possible.

The promotion of community cohesion is highly effectively and is embedded in the ethos of the school. Leaders have built highly successful links which benefit pupils and the local community. The school readily shares its expertise through collaborative partnerships with local schools and through the work of the outreach service. Direct links to schools within the global community are well established. Excellent links with local schools whose pupils are from different communities improve and develop pupils' understanding of life in a multi-ethnic society. The school is exceptionally successful at engaging parents and carers. School staff ensure parents and carers are kept well informed about their child's successes. School supports pupils' families exceptionally well by providing clubs and activities both after school and during the school day. As a result, parents and carers have opportunities to learn alongside their children and are highly appreciative of the ongoing work of the school. This work is carried out on a well-controlled budget, providing excellent value for money.

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

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
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	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	1
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Views of parents and carers

Nineteen responses were received by the inspection team from parents and carers. This represented 70% of the school population and was a very good response rate. The vast majority of questionnaires were wholly positive and supported the work of the school. The inspection findings support this view.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Spring Brook 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 inspector received 19 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 27 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	13	68	5	26	1	5	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	15	79	3	16	0	0	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	12	63	5	26	2	11	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)	11	58	7	37	0	0	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	13	68	6	32	0	0	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	15	79	4	21	0	0	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	14	74	5	26	0	0	0	0

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.



9 February 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Spring Brook School, Oldham, OL8 4JD

Thank you very much for making me so welcome when I inspected your school. It was really lovely to meet you and to hear how much you enjoy school. A special thank you to all the pupils who gave up their lunchtime to talk to me.

I judged the school as 'outstanding', our top category. I appreciate how much you all love coming to school and agree with those of you who told me that you think your school is just great. These are some of the things I think are especially good.

- The great welcome you all give to visitors.
- The way in which staff care for you so well and help you to make plans for your future.
- The excellent progress you all make in lessons.
- The outstanding way your teachers help you to learn.
- The way you help the local community by growing such brilliant vegetables.

Because your school is so good I have only asked for two things to make it even better. I have asked that:

- your teachers give you a few more opportunities to write longer pieces of work
- your school governors make sure they help and advise the school as much as they can.

Thank you once again for making me so very welcome, and I hope you all enjoy meeting next term the new friends you have been writing to from across Oldham.

Yours sincerely

Marian Thomas

Lead inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.