

Spring Meadow Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114834
Local Authority	Essex
Inspection number	357629
Inspection dates	13–14 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Mary Summers

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	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	221
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Andy Schooler
Headteacher	Linda Gildea
Date of previous school inspection	21 May 2008
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. They visited 19 lessons which were taught by 11 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors. Inspectors observed the school's work, and looked at documents associated with protecting pupils and keeping them safe, and school self-evaluation. They examined data and information about pupils' progress and looked at samples of pupils' work. They also scrutinised improvement plans, as well as planning for lessons and the curriculum. Minutes from meetings held by the governing body and monitoring and evaluation reports written by senior leaders and the local authority were also examined. Inspectors took account of the views of pupils and of 28 members of staff who had completed questionnaires, as well as the content of 54 questionnaires that had been returned by parents and carers.

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

- Boys' achievement throughout the school.
- The impact of the school's work to improve pupils' writing.
- How effectively the school is working to increase attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- How well teachers are catering for more-able pupils in lessons and challenging them to reach high levels in their work.

Information about the school

Most pupils who attend this average-sized primary school come from the immediate area. The very large majority are from White British backgrounds and very few speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals has grown in recent years and is now well above average. The proportion identified with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average although proportions vary considerably between year groups. Many of those identified have moderate learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural problems. The school has won a number of national awards in recent years, including the Quality Inclusion Mark and Healthy Schools enhanced award.

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

This is a good school which is improving well as a result of the focused actions of senior managers to extend pupils' attainment and progress. Strong relationships between all members of the school community result in a concerted effort to meet the needs of each child, whatever their needs, backgrounds or abilities. Pupils' progress is tracked meticulously so that any underachievement is quickly identified. Well organised and effective interventions are made to support those pupils who are not making the expected progress. Extremely successful partnerships with parents and carers mean that they are pleased with what the school does with their children and work with the school very effectively to support their children's learning. One parent noted, 'School staff have done everything in their power to make sure that my child is safe and happy.'

Teaching is good. Senior leaders, with the support of external partners, have developed rigorous procedures to check the quality of teaching and learning in every class and for every child. The staff's good commitment towards improvement is seen in the positive way in which they have implemented these recommendations. Consequently, pupils' learning and progress are good and continue to improve.

Most pupils enjoy coming to school. Attendance has risen: it is now average and continues to rise in response to the school's focused work with individual pupils and families. Pupils learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and most adopt them. They have a strong voice in school improvement through their work on the school council. They raise money to support local and international charities, making informed and sensitive decisions about where funds will be spent. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils reflect sensitively about their aspirations for the future and their progress over the year. One pupil wrote, 'This has been the best year in school yet! I've done better work and made new friends. I think that my attitude and commitment to my work has changed a lot.'

Children make good progress in most areas of learning in the Reception class. They are happy to come to school and develop good relationships with all the staff who work with them. They make less progress in writing because there are insufficient opportunities planned for them to practise their skills. Children's developing skills in writing are not checked carefully enough and the information used effectively to plan activities that are well matched to children's needs.

The headteacher has gained the good support of staff, parents and carers and there is a strong commitment towards improvement. The headteacher and senior staff have a clear understanding of school performance. However, governance, while satisfactory, lacks well organised systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work rigorously, review and update policies and check the impact of policies on school performance. Nonetheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in the way that

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assessment systems have been strengthened and support for underachieving pupils developed. The school has a good capacity for further improvement.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve children's progress in writing in the Reception class by:
 - planning more focused opportunities for children to practise their writing skills during independent activities within the classroom and in the outdoor area
 - check children's progress more carefully in writing and use the information to plan activities that are well matched to children's needs.
- Strengthen the governing body's role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance, ensuring that policies are regularly reviewed and updated and checking their impact on the school's performance.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

2

Children's skills vary considerably when they start in Reception but are usually below and sometimes well below those typical for their age. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, their attainment is broadly average. Last year, boys' achievement was particularly low but this is not a significant trend. This year, all groups of pupils, including boys, are making good progress. Attainment in writing has risen as a result of the school's focus on teaching pupils very specific strategies to enable them to write effective pieces of work in a range of different contexts. For example, Year 3 and 4 pupils wrote exciting play scripts involving characters from their studies about the Tudors and Year 6 pupils wrote very effective sentences to describe a character from 'The Highwayman'. Another key feature in pupils' improved attainment is the very well organised programme of small group work which supports pupils who are at risk of underachievement. These sessions are lively and challenging, and pupils clearly enjoy them and make good progress. More-able pupils take good levels of responsibility for their learning, checking their own and each other's work against clear checklists of the features required. They also make good progress and reach high levels in their work.

Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. All pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding for others' feelings and beliefs and go out of their way to support and encourage each other. These positive attitudes and sensitive relationships support pupils who face particular challenges in their learning. Some of these pupils have emotional and/or behavioural issues and their attendance is not always as high as that of other pupils in the school. This means that attendance is average overall. This factor, taken alongside pupils' average levels of attainment when they leave the school, means that they are adequately prepared for the future. Pupils know how to keep safe in and out of school and are very aware of the dangers of drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. Developing relationships with schools overseas are helping pupils to understand about life in communities outside their own experience.

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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	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	3
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	3
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?

Teachers have good subject knowledge which enables them to present lessons confidently. They know the pupils well and are able to use the information gained from rigorous progress checks to plan activities at different levels to meet pupils' different needs. Good teaching was seen in a mathematics lesson, for example, in which pupils worked in pairs to share the 'pirate's treasure' between them, thus learning how to find half of a given number. The more-able pupils were engrossed in an activity, supported by the teacher, in which they had to find more complex fractional parts of numbers, such as one quarter and three quarters. Pupils were fully engaged and extremely well behaved during the lesson and made good progress. Occasionally, when the pace of the lesson slows because too much time is spent on one activity, pupils lose concentration and this hinders their learning.

The good curriculum gives pupils good levels of responsibility for directing their learning and this supports their personal development well. The wide variety of work on display around the school shows strengths in art and history. The provision of specialist teaching in music and French enables pupils to make good progress in these subjects. Pupils' work in the school greenhouse and allotment has meant that pupils are developing a good understanding of environmental issues. Effective partnerships with local organisations provide useful opportunities for pupils to extend their academic, creative and sporting skills. Pupils appreciate the wide variety of clubs on offer and the annual residential visit

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which enables those in Year 6 to participate in a range of exciting and challenging physical activities.

Pupils are well cared for in school. Support staff, including the learning mentor, family support worker, extended services coordinator and community support worker make an exceptional contribution towards supporting children and families and helping them to access a wide range of services. One example of this is the way that they support pupils who are transferring to secondary schools. Dates have already been fixed to visit some individual pupils in their new schools next term. This is giving pupils the confidence they may have lacked to make an effective transfer. Breakfast club provides a pleasant and healthy start to the school day. It is well attended and encourages pupils to arrive early for school. Pupils are confident that any concerns they have will be quickly addressed. There are good systems in place to encourage regular attendance and the school continues to work with parents and carers of pupils whose attendance causes concern.

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 leadership team gives a firm steer to the school's work and there is a clear focus on securing improvement. Senior leaders successfully implemented a number of initiatives last year which have contributed well to improvements in pupils' attainment, especially in writing. Coordinators take an active role in monitoring the school's performance, planning to secure improvement and checking the impact of initiatives.

Parents and carers develop excellent levels of trust in the staff because of the strong partnerships that exist between them and the school. Staff are accessible on a daily basis and the headteacher often joins the learning mentor at the school gate each morning to welcome pupils, parents and carers. The school takes particular care to involve parents and carers who might otherwise not be involved in school life, and encourages them to take an active role in their children's education. Very successful initiatives, such as the distribution of 'maths packs' to those who attended a presentation evening have meant that more parents and carers are actively supporting their children at home. Good partnerships with a wide range of agencies have provided effective opportunities for pupils to engage in a wide range of activities within and beyond the school day, which the school could not otherwise provide. These include holiday clubs, sporting activities and programmes for pupils identified as gifted and talented, such as 'University Challenge'. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body represents the community well and provides sound support for the school. However, systems are not rigorous enough to ensure the governing body gains an accurate and first-hand picture of the school's

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performance. Policies are not reviewed regularly enough or their implementation checked to ensure effectiveness.

Safeguarding procedures are satisfactory. There are secure arrangements to ensure that pupils are safe at school. New staff are vetted carefully to ensure their suitability. Staff promote equality of opportunity well. Senior staff track the progress of different groups of pupils carefully to identify underachievement. Racist incidents are rare and procedures are in place to ensure that any which arise are tackled promptly. The school promotes community cohesion well. There is a very strong feeling of community within the school and locality, good links with other local schools and community organisations and a good link with a school in Ghana.

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	3
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	1
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	3
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 settle in quickly to the Reception class and make good progress over the year in virtually all aspects of their development. They quickly develop good levels of confidence and independence. A good focus on developing children's spoken language has resulted in them extending their vocabulary and sharing their ideas effectively. A group of children happily discussed why some objects would be easier to hide in the sand than others, talking about how to bury them so they could not be discovered.

Behaviour is good in and out of the classroom. Children have a good knowledge of how to keep safe, enjoy the healthy snacks offered and use the climbing and other equipment enthusiastically. They are well supported by all of the adults in the class. For example, small groups of children developed their knowledge of different letters and sounds, working with a teaching assistant who used the interactive whiteboard to help them see and hear the words and sentences they were making. Children do not make as much progress in developing their writing skills because there are insufficient planned

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opportunities for them to practise these during their independent play activities within the classroom and outdoors.

Leadership is good. Adults are suitably qualified and supervise children well to make sure they are safe and secure. Links with parents and carers are very effective in ensuring that information is shared so that any concerns or problems can be quickly addressed.

Children's progress is not tracked carefully enough in writing and the information used effectively to plan activities to meet children's different needs.

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

The proportion of parental questionnaires returned was lower than average. Parents and carers who did respond are positive about the school's work. Almost all say that the school helps their children understand how to keep safe and adopt healthy lifestyles. Most are happy with the teaching and the progress that their children are making, and the leadership and management of the school. These positive views were endorsed by inspection findings. A small minority expressed concern about how the school deals with unacceptable behaviour. Inspectors observed lessons in every class, observed behaviour at lunchtime and playtime, held discussions with pupils and examined the school's systems for managing behaviour. Their evidence confirmed that behaviour is managed well and that lessons are very seldom disrupted.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Spring Meadow 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 54 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 221 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	21	39	31	57	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	26	48	27	50	1	2	0	0
My school informs me about my child's progress	20	37	31	57	3	6	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	23	43	29	54	1	2	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	29	54	23	43	1	2	1	2
The school helps me to support my child's learning	23	43	28	52	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	20	37	33	61	0	0	1	2
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)	19	35	29	54	1	2	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	20	37	31	57	1	2	1	2
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	10	19	32	59	8	15	3	6
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	12	22	37	69	3	6	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	19	35	32	59	2	4	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	28	52	23	43	2	4	1	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	46	48	6	0
Primary schools	6	47	40	7
Secondary schools	12	39	38	11
Sixth forms	13	42	41	3
Special schools	28	49	19	4
Pupil referral units	14	45	31	10
All schools	10	46	37	7

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 2010 to 31 December 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 2010/11 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.



15 June 2011

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Spring Meadow Primary School, Harwich, CO12 4LB

Thank you so much for welcoming us recently to your school and giving us your opinions about the school. Your views, along with everything else that we saw, helped us to get to know your school and how well it works. You said your school is good and we agree with you. Here are some of the important things we found out about it.

You work hard in class and make good progress.

You understand how to keep safe, healthy and fit.

You behave well in lessons and in the playground.

Adults look after you well so you are confident to ask for help if you need it.

You do lots of jobs and activities in school to help the adults and each other and raise funds to help children who are not as fortunate as yourselves.

The people in charge are working extremely well with your parents and carers to make sure you are happy and healthy.

There are a few things that could be even better in your school. We have asked the adults in Reception to help you make better progress in writing by planning more activities in the classroom and outdoors that will help you practise your writing more often. We have also asked them to check your progress in writing more carefully and to use the information to plan activities that will help you improve. Finally, we have asked the governing body to organise better systems to help them keep a closer check on what is happening in school.

You all can play your part in helping your school become better by making sure you work hard, behave well and attend school every day unless you are ill.

Yours sincerely

Mary Summers

Lead inspector

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