

Springbank Primary Academy

Inspection report

Unique reference number	115597
Local authority	N/A
Inspection number	387162
Inspection dates	14–15 June 2012
Lead inspector	Rodney Braithwaite

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

Type of School	Academy
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	265
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Bob Wolfson
Headteacher	Claire Morrison and Shirley Clarke
Date of previous school inspection	9–10 March 2010
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Age group	4–11
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Introduction

Inspection team

Rodney Braithwaite

Additional inspector

Carol Warrant

Additional inspector

David Williams

Additional inspector

This inspection was carried out with two days' notice. The inspectors observed 25 lessons or part lessons taught by 13 teachers. Meetings were held with pupils, the co-headteachers, teachers and representatives of the governing body. Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at the safeguarding arrangements as well as other information, including policies, procedures, school development plans, external evaluations and a range of pupils' work. Sixty questionnaires from parents and carers were scrutinised, together with those received from staff and a representative sample of pupils.

Information about the school

Springbank is slightly larger than the average-sized primary school. It became an Academy in August 2011. Most pupils are White British, with the remainder representing a range of other ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is higher than the national average. The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is higher than that seen nationally. Last year, the school did not meet the current floor standards, which set the minimum standards expected by the government. The school has an Early Years Foundation Stage, comprising two single-age Reception classes. There are three mixed-age classes; Years 1/2, Years 3/4 and Years 5/6. The two co-headteachers are also the co-headteachers of Rowanfield Junior School with which Springbank is in partnership.

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	2
Achievement of pupils	2
Quality of teaching	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils	2
Leadership and management	1

Key findings

- Springbank Academy is a good school. The considerable improvement in the school's performance reported two years ago has been maintained and built upon because the leadership and management of the school are outstanding in all respects. This has led to the improved attainment and achievement of almost all pupils and consistently good teaching throughout the school. The school has many strengths, but is not yet outstanding because the attainment of pupils and its consistency over time is capable of further improvement.
- The school's close links with Rowanfield Junior School are proving extremely beneficial. The co-headteachers of both schools have led the school with determination, and have created a strong team of leaders throughout the school. The development and management of teaching, and the subsequent performance of the school, is particularly rigorous and effective. The governing body shares the ambition of the leaders, which has driven the many improvements in the school successfully.
- Pupils make consistently good progress from the Early Years Foundation Stage to the end of Year 6, especially in developing the basic skills of English and mathematics. As a result, pupils' achievement is good. However, the pupils' skills of learning independently are not as secure and a few teachers do not always take the opportunities occurring in lessons to extend pupils' learning and understanding further.
- Behaviour, safety and pupils' attitudes to learning are all good. Pupils enjoy coming to school, as shown by their much improved attendance. Parents and carers are positive about the school's provision for their children. However, school leaders are rightly concerned that their efforts to involve parents and carers are not proving as successful as they would wish, and that there is a necessity for further initiatives.
- Provision for the care of pupils, in particular for disabled pupils and those with

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special educational needs, is excellent.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Extend the school's existing coaching model to improve teaching further so that:
 - the best practice seen in the most effective lessons is shared and developed in all classes
 - teachers develop greater flexibility in their responses to extra learning opportunities that may arise in lessons
 - pupils are helped to extend their skills in learning independently to improve their achievement.

- Strengthen and develop the present partnership with parents and carers by:
 - helping more of them to understand how they can support their child's learning
 - introducing further opportunities and initiatives to enable them to gain more knowledge of their child's progress.

Main report

Achievement of pupils

Most children enter the school with skills below those expected for their age, especially in their language development. They receive a good start to their education, make good progress and achieve well in the Reception classes in all areas of learning. They make especially good progress in the development of their reading and number skills. Nearly all continue this good progress in Years 1 and 2, and reach the expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. This has not been the case in the past, but there has been a significant acceleration in learning and progress in the last two years.

A similar picture exists in Years 3 to 6, where pupils' attainment and achievement were below that expected for several years. However, the school's determined commitment to improvement over the last two years has led to rapid progress in the attainment of the great majority of pupils. Substantial evidence confirms that pupils are now reaching national expectations in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6. Additionally, pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 are also reaching age-related expectations. This reflects good progress and achievement and applies to all groups of pupils. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making especially good progress because of the personalised nature of their support. Although a small number of pupils are now reaching above average levels in English and mathematics, the school realises that as solid foundations for learning are in place, even more pupils can reach higher standards. The marked improvements in achievement are the result of greatly improved and consistent teaching, many new learning initiatives and excellent attention to detail about the individual learning

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needs of pupils. A very significant factor in the improvement in writing has been the school-wide introduction of the storytelling approach, which has generated great enthusiasm in pupils and higher standards.

Greatly improved reading skills are contributing strongly to better progress and achievement in English for many pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and appreciate the many new and exciting books they have. They thrive on learning their letter sounds and the younger pupils are learning to use their word-building skills effectively, which is increasing their enjoyment of reading. This was seen to excellent effect in Years 1 and 2, when all pupils were engaged in different ability groups, all with supporting adults, in developing their understanding of the construction and meaning of words. All parents and carers in their responses indicate that the school is successfully developing their children's basic skills, and almost all feel that they are making good progress.

Quality of teaching

The quality of teaching, which is good, has shown considerable improvement in the last two years, resulting in much better outcomes for pupils and teachers who are gaining in confidence in their abilities to get the best out of pupils. Improvement in teaching is primarily the result of high-quality coaching by the co-headteachers to enhance teaching skills. This has led to a consistent and rigorous approach to planning for the needs of all pupils, and the promotion of clear expectations and challenge in all classrooms. This was seen in a lesson in a Years 5/6 class when the teacher helped pupils to learn the meaning of 'rhetorical', 'onomatopoeia' and 'alliteration', and a pupil talked accurately about the use of 'emotive language' in writing.

The most effective teaching is characterised by probing questions, as seen in a lesson in an English set in Years 5/6, when many pupils answered accurately and at length how they would resolve the ending to a mystery/suspense story. Teachers' marking is accurate and offers clear guidelines through the 'purple pointers' on how pupils can improve. Notably, many pupils talk in detail about their targets for improvement. Teachers' use of assessment data in their planning is good, and all teachers use classroom technology effectively. Mixed-age classes are managed well because teachers' planning is matched to pupils' needs and prior experiences rather than simply based on their ages. Teaching assistants are skilled in understanding the needs of all pupils, especially disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. These pupils are integrated effectively into all class and group activities and are well supported. Teaching also benefits from the shared experiences and expertise of staff from the partner school.

Not all teachers are sufficiently confident to develop in their own teaching some of the outstanding practice already present in the school, for example through seizing opportunities which may arise in lessons, particularly those generated by the pupils. Some teachers also do not provide enough encouragement and opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills to enhance their achievement and self-

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reliance. Virtually all parents and carers feel that their children are taught well, as one, typical of others, wrote, 'My child has a thirst for learning and is always enthusiastic to go to school, which is due to exciting lessons and the enthusiasm of the teachers.' Nearly all pupils in their responses agreed that teaching is good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Discussion with pupils and the analysis of records show that behaviour is typically good. The great majority of parents and carers feel that their children are kept safe in school and that behaviour is good. The very small numbers who express concerns describe specific incidents rather than repeated problems. Most pupils have no concerns about behaviour and are very clear about how the school manages any pupils who step out of line. All pupils are 'signed-up' to the EPIC (Effort, Participation, Improvement and Celebration) vision of their conduct and learning in school. Pupils have strong belief in the ideas behind the vision and all can explain its meaning. Pupils especially enjoy the 'Celebration' aspect and their pleasure in this was seen very clearly in the end of week assemblies, when successful pupils hugged their cups and awards with delight.

In lessons, nearly all pupils are always fully engaged and try their best. They cooperate well with each other and in small groups, and when they 'Wake and Shake' together on the playground at the start of school. They report few cases of bullying, only occasional name-calling, 'and none in Key Stage 2'. Most express strong awareness of cyber-bullying following the recent warnings by the school, and understand that bullying can be mental as well as physical. Pupils feel that the school is safe and that everyone is respectful of others' safety. Older pupils enjoy taking responsibilities and are to be seen at all times of the day doing jobs, particularly checking punctuality first thing in the morning. The school has good links with other agencies to meet the needs of any children whose circumstances make them vulnerable or who are potentially disruptive.

Attendance this year is the highest recorded for a number of years, and is slightly above the national average. This is because of exceptional monitoring arrangements and the widely held opinion that pupils enjoy coming to school so much more than previously.

Leadership and management

The visionary and relentlessly ambitious leadership of the co-headteachers has maintained, and in parts strengthened, the management of the school since its last inspection. They have built a strong support structure of other managers, including the deputy headteacher who is the leader of the school when neither of the co-headteachers is present. Those with management responsibilities are all playing substantial roles in the leadership's uncompromising drive for sustained excellence and improvement. The high quality monitoring of teaching, mainly by the co-headteachers and the deputy headteacher, has resulted in consistently good and occasionally outstanding teaching. Excellent professional development ensures that

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guidance for improvement is rigorously followed up. As a result, all staff and pupils are driven by the shared ambition of making the school as good as it can be. Morale is high, behaviour is good and pupils want to come to school as shown by their improved attendance.

The strongly led and motivated governing body has played its part in the school's renaissance and is constantly involved in seeking improvement. Governors are always prepared to challenge school leaders; they undertake their safeguarding duties well, and their careful budgeting has helped the school to recover from a significant deficit. Leaders are particularly accurate in their evaluation of the school's performance, which is helped by their depth of knowledge about the needs of every pupil. The school promotes equal opportunities effectively and has overcome past problems with the underachievement of many pupils. The school is fully inclusive and there is no evidence of discrimination. The school provides a well-managed and resourced breakfast club on a daily basis.

The good curriculum takes account of pupils' needs and interests. Although the necessity to raise basic standards has led to a marked emphasis on literacy and numeracy, leaders have developed a wider thematic approach, giving a broader and more exciting approach to learning. This is enhanced by the many extra-curricular opportunities and clubs, as well as regular shared learning experiences with pupils from the partner school. The curriculum has a strong impact on pupils' pride in their work and their school, and promotes their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. The school has tried a number of strategies to engage more effectively with parents and carers, but only a minority respond to the school's efforts to involve them. The school leaders recognise that their partnership with parents and carers needs a fresh impetus so that more of them can be involved with their children's learning.

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	54	42	2	2
Primary schools	14	49	32	6
Secondary schools	20	39	34	7
Special schools	33	45	20	3
Pupil referral units	9	55	28	8
All schools	16	47	31	6

New school inspection arrangements have been introduced from 1 January 2012. This means that inspectors make judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above are for the period 1 September to 31 December 2011 and represent judgements that were made under the school inspection arrangements that were introduced on 1 September 2009. These data 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.

Primary schools include primary academy converters. Secondary schools include secondary academy converters, sponsor-led academies and city technology colleges. Special schools include special academy converters and non-maintained special schools.

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

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning and development taking account of their attainment.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Attendance:	the regular attendance of pupils at school and in lessons, taking into account the school's efforts to encourage good attendance.
Behaviour:	how well pupils behave in lessons, with emphasis on their attitude to learning. Pupils' punctuality to lessons and their conduct around the school.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving based on its self-evaluation and what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Floor standards:	the national minimum expectation of attainment and progression measures.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the governors and 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:	inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school.
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.
Safety:	how safe pupils are in school, including in lessons; and their understanding of risks. Pupils' freedom from bullying and harassment. How well the school promotes safety, for example e-learning.

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.

18 June 2012

Dear Pupils



Springbank Primary Academy, Cheltenham, GL51 0PH

Thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school recently. Right from the moment we saw you all doing 'Wake and Shake' in the playground before school, we knew that we were going to enjoy a lively two days. You were all very friendly and we enjoyed talking to you about your work. We especially liked the way you used 'storytelling' in your writing, how you are learning your letter sounds, and how many of you could talk about your 'EPIC' way of doing things at Springbank. It was a pleasure to see how many of you won awards at your celebration assemblies, and how proud it made you feel. We were also pleased to see how many of you like to take responsibilities and 'do jobs', especially the monitors of children who are late arriving for school.

You go to a good school, where you are kept safe and looked after very well by the staff. You are now reaching the standards expected for your age in writing, reading and mathematics. This is because you work hard, enjoy coming to school, and have good teachers who have worked really well to help you improve. We are sure that you will all continue this improvement, because we think you have some exceptional school leaders, who share your determination to do as well as you can.

You behave well in classrooms and the playground, and it was good to hear from you that there is hardly any bullying. Although the school has improved in many ways, we have made some suggestions which we hope will lead to more improvements. We would like teachers to teach even more outstanding lessons to excite you, and to follow up more on some of the things you say in lessons. Also, we would like you to have more opportunities to work and think for yourselves. Finally, we would like the school's leaders to help your parents and carers to see how well you are doing in school, and perhaps even try to learn with you sometimes. You can help by encouraging them to come to school for some of the events that show what and how well you learn.

Yours sincerely

Rodney Braithwaite
Lead inspector

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