

Summerswood Primary School

Furzehill Road, Borehamwood, WD6 2DW

Inspection dates 10–11 October 2012

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| Overall effectiveness | Previous inspection: | Satisfactory | 3 |
| | This inspection: | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Achievement of pupils | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Quality of teaching | | Requires improvement | 3 |
| Behaviour and safety of pupils | | Good | 2 |
| Leadership and management | | Requires improvement | 3 |

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching requires improvement. Despite some strengths, it is not consistently good enough to promote sustained good progress in all aspects of literacy and numeracy.
- Standards in reading by Year 2, although average, are not as good as in writing and mathematics.
- Similarly, standards by Year 6 in mathematics are weaker than in English.
- Not enough more-able pupils reach the levels they are capable of in the Year 6 national English and mathematics tests.
- Leadership and management also require improvement, although the senior leadership team and governing body provide a clear vision and sense of direction for the future.
- Staff turnover has been high, and the large majority of the staff are relatively new to teaching. The coaching and support they receive from the senior leaders are not yet improving standards rapidly enough.
- Lessons are not always planned sufficiently well to take account of pupils' individual needs and ensure high enough demands are made of the different groups of learners.

The school has the following strengths

- The senior and more experienced leaders work well together as a team to monitor and support the newer and less experienced staff.
- Leaders and the governing body are focused well on promoting school improvement.
- The school has sharpened the way it checks regularly the progress pupils are making.
- The school works hard to develop and promote links with pupils' families.
- Children make a good start to their education in the Reception classes.
- Pupils in the Primary Support Base do well thanks to excellent support.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well in a friendly atmosphere.
- Pupils are happy, feel safe, and behave well in lessons and around the school.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 19 lessons, of which two were joint observations with senior leaders. All class teachers and their teaching assistants were seen.
- Inspectors observed the work of the staff in the designated support unit (the Primary Support Base). A discussion was held with the unit's team leader concerning work within the school and also outreach work with other schools.
- Other direct observations included hearing pupils from Years 2 and 6 read, attending assemblies and a scrutiny of pupils' work.
- Inspectors looked at a wide range of school documents, including: development plans; policies; self-evaluation reports; monitoring files; safeguarding and curriculum materials; local authority reports on the school; evidence of the school's partnership work; governing body documents; and information for families.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils from Key Stages 1 and 2, including pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable. In addition, many informal opportunities were taken to talk with pupils.
- Discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, class teachers, office staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 30 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), and spoke individually with several parents and carers during the course of the inspection.

Inspection team

Michael Miller, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Natasha Campbell

Additional Inspector

John Greevy

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is an average-sized primary school. There are two classes in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1, but only one class in each of Years 3 to 6. It is expanding to take children from the age of three with the addition of a nursery from January 2013.
- The school meets the current government floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for the attainment and progress of pupils by the end of Year 6.
- The large majority of pupils are of White British heritage, or other White ethnic backgrounds. However, the percentage of pupils from other ethnic backgrounds, or who speak English as an additional language, is above average.
- An average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in local authority care and pupils who receive free school meals.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through 'school action', and also through 'school action plus' or a statement of special educational needs, are above average.
- On behalf of the local authority the school hosts a specially resourced provision for pupils with special educational needs. This Primary Support Base takes up to six pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 from across the local authority area. All have a statement of special educational needs for behavioural, emotional or social difficulties.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the proportion of good and better teaching by Easter 2013 by:
 - developing the skills of all class teachers in the use of data and assessment information in their lesson planning
 - ensuring that all lesson activities are demanding by taking full account of individual pupils' previous learning so that their different needs are specifically catered for
 - checking more precisely and consistently on pupils' progress in lessons to identify more clearly their next steps in learning
 - increasing opportunities for the more experienced senior and middle leaders to provide more effective coaching and support for the newer, less experienced teachers and coordinators.
- Accelerate pupils' progress and raise attainment and throughout the school by:
 - adopting a consistently effective approach to the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) in Key Stage 1
 - encouraging more parents and carers to contribute to their children's learning through supporting reading at home
 - teaching calculations and mental mathematics more effectively in Key Stage 2
 - ensuring that senior leaders evaluate, by Christmas 2012, the impact of the new arrangements for setting in mathematics in Years 5 and 6
 - increasing the proportion of pupils gaining higher levels in national tests by the end of Year 6.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- After a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, pupils do not always make the progress of which they are capable in reading in Key Stage 1. By the time they leave at the end of Year 6, standards are average overall but weaker in mathematics than in English, particularly in terms of calculations and the application of mental mathematics.
- Children join the Reception class from a wide range of pre-school settings and backgrounds, with skills and understanding that are typically below the levels expected nationally for their age. Good use of assessment ensures that the activities designed for the children meet their individual needs well, so most children make good progress across the areas of learning.
- Pupils are particularly successful in learning letters and sounds (phonics) in the Reception and Year 1 classes. In an outstanding Reception class lesson, children made rapid progress in recognising new letters and sounds while singing 's' sounds about a 'snake in the grass' and imitating aeroplanes and engine noises to the sound of the letter 'n'. Children had great fun and appreciated each other's success as well as their own.
- However, reading and phonics skills are less secure in Year 2. Distinct differences in pupils' skills in different classes have resulted from past weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Teachers still miss occasional opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy skills in some lessons. The school is now making good use of the data from the new national Year 1 phonics test to improve pupils' reading skills.
- In Summer 2012, there was a marked improvement in the standards pupils attained by the end of Year 2. Attainment rose to above average in writing and mathematics, but was average in reading. The school has not yet secured a track record in maintaining this success.
- The school has tried various strategies to raise standards in mathematics, but with mixed success. Mixed-ability mathematics 'streams' are now taught in Years 5 and 6 to accelerate learning, and this will be evaluated in the near future to see whether the strategy should be applied in other subject areas. This is one of several initiatives to help more-able pupils to achieve higher levels in national tests and assessments.
- Discussions with pupils identified as being disabled or having special educational needs, and those who are new to learning English, show they feel supported well by their teachers and teaching assistants. However, although often providing oral help and advice, not all teachers plan sufficiently for pupils' individual learning needs during lessons to ensure that they make good progress.
- There is, however, excellent support for pupils who use the Primary Resource Base. Such pupils are integrated fully into mainstream classes and the life of the school. Exemplary assessment practices help to ensure that their specific needs are met well by experienced and professional specialist staff, and they make good progress.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- The key difficulty for the school in improving the quality of teaching and learning has been the high staff turnover in the recent past, and the relative inexperience of its newly qualified teachers. Some parents and carers commented on this, but understood the importance to the

school of new teachers in building a stable staff committed to the school and its development.

- The staff questionnaires and discussions with newly qualified teachers show they are receiving very helpful advice and support from the more experienced staff. They are committed to the school and the exciting opportunities provided by the opening of the new nursery, under an experienced leader, in January 2013. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are looking to exploit increased opportunities to support all staff.
- Some examples of good teaching were seen from all teachers. They demonstrate good subject knowledge and understanding, but the practical application of these skills is sometimes affected by their level of teaching experience. Nevertheless, teachers and support staff are good at building working relationships with the pupils, and this adds significantly to the quality of learning.
- Where weaker teaching was seen, this was mainly linked with the quality of lesson planning and the level of teachers' skills in questioning to check pupils' understanding. Planning does not always identify specifically the support for learning necessary for both individuals and groups of pupils, including the more able.
- The school has collected a wealth of data about the performance and progress of all individual pupils. However, this is not being used effectively enough by all teachers to aid their planning. To help with this, staff hold 'planning parties' to support each other.
- Some new subject coordinators are still developing the skills to help them monitor teaching and learning more effectively. This will take time, but the school has set itself the realistic target of Easter 2013 to secure the necessary improvements.
- There are some examples of outstanding teaching and learning. In an excellent Year 5 and 6 mathematics lesson for more-able pupils, the teacher consistently challenged them in their work on the angles of triangles and quadrilaterals. Pupils from both year groups were applying their knowledge and understanding to a level generally expected in Years 8 or 9. This confirmed exactly what such pupils are capable of.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- Pupils say they appreciate what their teachers and teaching assistants have to offer them, and the help and advice they receive relating to both their learning and personal development. This common theme was also reflected in inspectors' discussions with parents and carers, and helps explain why pupils' attitudes to learning in lessons are good.
- Pupils are usually involved actively in lessons, and enjoy cooperating with each other and working in groups. They gain a great deal from work with their discussion partners or 'learning buddies'. The sharing of their ideas and the benefit they gain from talking about their work are significant.
- Pupils particularly enjoy the opportunities to develop their creativity and use their imagination, which help their work in writing. In a Year 6 science lesson there was palpable excitement when the teacher announced they were going to work on an investigation. Such activities promote the pupils' spiritual development in encouraging them to reflect on their work, learn from their reflection and make connections between different aspects of their learning.
- Attendance is average and has improved since the last inspection. School staff work hard with

families to encourage attendance and engage quickly and effectively with parents when absences are noted, or where pupils are most at risk.

- While a few responses to Parent View indicated some concern about behaviour and bullying, no parents or carers spoken with by inspectors expressed any such concerns. Discussions with a range of pupils show they have a good understanding of what constitutes the different types of bullying. They are adamant that this is rare, and this is supported by the school's records.
- Pupils recognise that the school's approach to 'restorative justice' is fair, but might be uncomfortable at times. The fact that pupils are enabled to take responsibility for their actions is indicative of how well their social and moral development is promoted.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The school's own analysis of its performance judges that further improvement is required in respect of pupils' progress. Senior leaders are well aware that the effectiveness of the school's actions is judged by their impact on pupils' overall achievement.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher are providing an infectious drive and energy that is building on the existing strengths of the school while maintaining a strong focus on promoting more consistency in the quality of teaching to ensure pupils' accelerated progress. This is linked securely to teachers' performance through the promotion of 'Teachers' Standards', and training and coaching to improve further both teaching and learning. It is also coupled with the drive to improve reading in Key Stage 1 and mathematics in Key Stage 2.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - is very supportive of the school and of the senior leadership team's drive for improvement
 - is involved actively in the school's life and work
 - makes good use of its members' expertise in its systematic support of the school
 - takes good care to monitor and help promote further the quality of teaching and learning
 - monitors regularly the impact of both performance management targets for teachers and the spending of the pupil premium in the promotion of pupils' progress.
- The school is making good use of the pupil premium to help raise the achievement, in both literacy and numeracy, of pupils with special educational needs and/or who are known to be eligible for free school meals. This has had a positive impact in Key Stage 1, but the school has still to establish a track record of increased success in Key Stage 2.
- Good support from the local authority is helping the school to achieve its required improvements. Normal termly monitoring is being extended by specific support and training to augment that provided by the senior leadership team. A shared support programme also gives senior leaders more time to increase their monitoring work.
- The school has worked hard to build good working relationships with its community. Nearly all parents and carers are happy with its work, and their support was reflected when 140 of them attended the Reception and Key Stage 1 Harvest Festival assembly during the inspection. However, the school has been less successful in encouraging families to help their children's learning through regular reading at home.
- The regular outreach work provided to a number of local schools by the staff in the Primary Resource Base unit is much valued by them. At times, the school is able to provide 'respite care' for pupils from these schools. The cooperation between unit staff and the local authority

educational psychologist in the support and assessment of pupils who need the unit's specialist services is particularly effective.

- On the door of the Year 6 classroom a quotation from the American writer Henry Thoreau (1817-61) sums up the school's approach: 'Go confidently in the direction of your dreams! Live the life you've imagined.' This is why the pupils enjoy school. It also reflects an underlying perspective that counters discrimination and ensures that all in the school community are appreciated and understood as individuals.

What inspection judgements mean

| School | | |
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| Grade | Judgement | Description |
| Grade 1 | Outstanding | An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 2 | Good | A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment. |
| Grade 3 | Requires improvement | A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection. |
| Grade 4 | Inadequate | <p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> |

School details

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| Unique reference number | 117182 |
| Local authority | Hertfordshire |
| Inspection number | 405690 |

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

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| Type of school | Primary |
| School category | Community |
| Age range of pupils | 4–11 |
| Gender of pupils | Mixed |
| Number of pupils on the school roll | 294 |
| Appropriate authority | The governing body |
| Chair | Scott Simpson |
| Headteacher | Elaine Sadler |
| Date of previous school inspection | 18 January 2011 |
| Telephone number | 020 8953 3139 |
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