

Beechcroft Infant School

Beechcroft Road, Upper Stratton, Swindon, Wiltshire, SN2 7QE

Inspection dates 29–30 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- Pupils' attainment is high and is well above national averages in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2. The proportions of pupils reaching Level 3 is well above national averages in both reading and mathematics.
- Teaching in Reception is very effective and children make good progress from their starting points and are well prepared for Year 1.
- Pupils feel safe and well looked after and this is due to the good work by the school. Pupils like going to school and enjoy their time there.
- Relationships in school between the pupils and with the adults who work with them are good.
- Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and pupils have a good attitude to learning.
- The school is well led by the new headteacher who is supported by a strong middle-leadership team. Members of the leadership team work well together and have a clear focus on raising the quality of teaching in the school. The school has a good capacity to improve.
- Governors know the school well and hold the senior leaders to account for the progress the pupils make.
- The school curriculum contributes strongly to the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils do not make the corrections that would improve their work after they get feedback from their teachers.
- When learning to read, pupils do not learn the sounds that groups of letters make quickly enough.
- School leaders at all levels use the information they have on how well pupils are doing to track the progress of different groups of pupils. However this could be done more easily and efficiently to spot trends in the progress groups of pupils are making.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors saw parts of 16 lessons, two of which were jointly observed with the assistant headteacher with responsibility for teaching and learning. Pupils were also seen working in shorter visits to Reception classes and in Year 2 mathematics lessons.
- A whole-school assembly, led by one of the assistant headteachers, was observed.
- Meetings were held with groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other governors, and senior and middle leaders. The lead inspector held a telephone conversation with a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors listened to pupils read and scrutinised samples of pupils' workbooks.
- A wide range of documents was examined, including the school's information on pupils' recent progress, planning and documentation about checks on teaching, and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding arrangements.
- The inspectors also took account of the 56 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and of informal discussions with parents as they dropped their children off at school. Inspectors considered the views of the staff from 25 questionnaires that were returned.

Inspection team

David Hogg, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Anna Majcher

Additional Inspector

Wendy Marriott

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Beechcroft is an average-sized infant school. Most pupils come from the local area, but in recent years an increasing number of pupils have come from further afield.
- There are very few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attending the school.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children looked after by the local authority and those from service families, is lower than the national average. There are no children from service families currently attending the school.
- The proportion of pupils with special educational needs supported at school action is above the national average, as is the proportion supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs.
- The headteacher and the senior leadership team were all internally appointed to these new roles in September 2013.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that a greater proportion is outstanding, by ensuring that:
 - the very good practice that already exists in the school is applied in all classes
 - teachers make sure that pupils quickly make the improvements pointed out in their marking.
- Improve the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) so that all pupils learn the sounds that groups of letters make more quickly.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by ensuring that school leaders at all levels use information more efficiently on how well pupils are doing to compare the progress of different groups.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- In most years, children join the Reception classes with levels of skills and knowledge that are a little below those expected for their age. As a result of good teaching and well targeted support from teaching assistants, the progress the children make in all areas of learning, including mathematics and literacy, is good or better. Consequently, they are well prepared for the move into Year 1.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check has been below that seen nationally in the last two years. Work in pupils' books indicates that the progress they make slows somewhat in Year 1.
- The progress pupils make in reading speeds up as they move through Year 2, where they also do better in writing and mathematics. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 2 over time has been high. The results in national assessments in 2013 indicate that this improving trend in reading, writing and mathematics is continuing.
- The most-able pupils are suitably challenged, with the proportion achieving Level 3 in reading and mathematics well above national averages. The attainment of these pupils is also improving in writing.
- The school tracks the progress pupils make carefully and monitors how well of groups of pupils and individuals are doing to assess if additional support is needed. The progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs across the school is broadly in line with that of other pupils.
- The pupil premium has been used thoughtfully. For example, it provides an experienced teacher to work with pupils to focus on any gaps in their understanding with small group and one-to-one sessions or to provide additional pastoral support. The school's data indicate that this is having some impact on these pupils' attainment in English, but gaps between them and their peers do remain. In the most recent national assessments at the end of Year 2, those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals were a little over a term and a half behind other pupils in English and mathematics.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching overall is very effective in helping pupils to do well. Lessons engage and interest pupils and activities are pitched to meet the abilities of different groups. The most-able pupils are suitably challenged by the tasks set. Pupils who are struggling receive a good level of support from their teachers and teaching assistants who may work with them in small groups.
- Teachers use a range of strategies to get ideas across to pupils and allow them to develop their understanding. In a Year 2 history lesson, pupils learned about the work of Florence Nightingale through a range of role-playing activities. The activities excited the pupils and consolidated what they had learnt about this important historical figure.
- Teachers use questioning effectively to challenge pupils and to assess their understanding of what they are learning.
- Pupils' work is well marked by their teachers in a way which provides them with clear guidance on how to improve. Pupils do not make the corrections to their work immediately but are expected to remember them for the next time. This means that important guidance on improvement can easily be forgotten.
- Teachers take the opportunities presented by multicultural festivals to raise the pupils' awareness of the diversity around them. In the Reception class, for example, the room was set up with many references to Chinese New Year, with noodles and rice to explore and a role-play café for children to use.
- Over the last two years there has been some turmoil in the teaching in Year 1. Phonics teaching in Year 1 does not enable pupils to learn the sounds letters and groups of letters make quickly

enough. Lessons do not always provide enough challenge for the most-able pupils or sufficient opportunities for pupils to use and develop the knowledge that they have. The school is aware of these issues and has taken steps to address remaining weaknesses. Although, some of the more recent measures have yet to have a significant impact on pupils' outcomes.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils feel well looked after while in school by all of the adults around them. The school has worked hard to raise their understanding of 'stranger danger'. It has invited police officers to come in to talk to the pupils about the careful use of social media games and the internet more widely. Pupils can explain why these things are important.
- The behaviour of pupils is good overall and contributes well to their learning. Nevertheless, pupils can become less focused on what they should be doing when faced with unfamiliar teachers or when teaching does not engage them.
- Pupils enjoy being at school. Unkindness is rare, although pupils reported that sometimes children can be a bit rough and fall out. Generally, this is dealt with effectively by the pupils themselves and they are encouraged to take responsibility and sort problems out for themselves. During the inspection, pupils playing together sensibly at break times. Pupils are clear that if they have problems there are always adults around who will help with any issues.
- Pupils take on responsibilities within school, for example as members of the school council or the eco-committee. Pupils enjoy a wide range of clubs and activities such as gym, dance and cooking.
- The relationships in the school are good. Pupils get on well with each other and with the adults around them. They work well in small groups and mostly stay focused on tasks for extended periods of time without needing close supervision.
- The school works hard to reduce pupils' absence and to ensure that all parents understand the importance of good attendance. Attendance broadly average and there are signs that it is improving.

The leadership and management are good

- The school is very well led by the headteacher and her senior team, who all know the school very well. The headteacher is developing a model of shared leadership and responsibility amongst her senior team and with the middle leaders, and there is a collegiate approach to securing improvements. The roles of the individual members of the leadership team are clearly understood as are the responsibilities they have to make sure the school gets better. The school has a good capacity to improve.
- The self-evaluation of the school by the headteacher is accurate and the development priorities in the school improvement plan, which has been reviewed by the governing body, are appropriate. The local authority has provided some additional support to the headteacher in her first year in charge and the school has provided additional training for staff to improve the quality of teaching. However, the very good practice evident in some classrooms has not so far been shared systematically to help coach and mentor teachers.
- The school checks how well pupils are doing, but the current system does not enable school leaders to assess easily how groups of pupils are performing or to compare the relative rates of progress of different year groups. A new system is being developed and the school recognises that training is needed for staff at all levels to ensure it is effectively used.
- The curriculum engages pupils and provides them with stimulating activities. The plans for implementing the new National Curriculum are well in place. The curriculum is enriched by visits to interesting places in the local area and to places of significance further afield such as the Natural History Museum which was visited by children in in the Reception classes. The school has also brought exciting experiences into school such as a mobile farm with its memorably loud

donkey.

- The school strives for equality of opportunity for all of the pupils and challenges intolerance. Lessons on different cultures and faiths explore the diversity in everyday living that pupils may come across. Kindness is promoted, as are the values of care and respect, and support for the development of pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness is good.
- The school aims to use the additional primary sports funding to employ sports professionals to train staff to improve the teaching of physical education, for example, gymnastics. Sports activities are already enjoyed by the pupils and the school wants to extend those opportunities further. Plans are well thought out, although it is not yet fully clear how the impact of these initiatives will be tracked and assessed.
- Pupils' welfare is of the highest priority and the school works hard to ensure that effective safeguarding and child protection procedures are in place.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is very supportive of the school, but prepared to hold it to account for how well the pupils are doing. Governors monitor the information the school holds on the progress of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium funding, and know how well the school is performing against national figures. Governors visit the school regularly and meet with subject coordinators to review their work. Through these meetings and by reviewing information provided by the headteacher, they have a good understanding of the quality of teaching in the school and of how any underperformance is being tackled. In addition, governors know about the efforts being made by school leaders to improve attendance and the teaching of phonics. The governing body monitors the financial position of the school carefully and is beginning to monitor how the additional primary sports funding is used. The governors also have a clear understanding of how salary increases and the promotion of teachers are linked to how well pupils achieve. Safeguarding arrangements are reviewed carefully to ensure that the pupils are properly cared for.

What inspection judgements mean

School		
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

Unique reference number	126210
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	441064

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Infant
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	4–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	251
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Julie Gulliver
Headteacher	Jo-Anne Rutt
Date of previous school inspection	1–2 December 2010
Telephone number	01793 823278
Fax number	01793 331880
Email address	admin@beechcroft.swindon.sch.uk

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