

Springmead Primary School

Hillyfields, Welwyn Garden City, AL7 2HB

Inspection dates

28–29 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.

- Springmead is a well-organised, safe and welcoming place. Pupils like their teachers and enjoy coming to school, where they are well cared for.
- Leaders are good role models for both staff and pupils, and work continually to improve the quality of teaching and the pupils' achievement.
- Governors support them well, ensuring the school is effective.
- Children get a very good start in the highly effective and caring nursery and make good progress throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage, developing their confidence and speaking skills well.
- Pupils make good progress in all subjects. By the end of Key Stage 2, they reach standards that are above national averages in reading and mathematics. They read widely and have a good vocabulary.
- Most teaching is good and some is outstanding. Teachers establish good relationships with their class and manage pupils' behaviour skilfully. They provide activities that interest and engage pupils.
- The school engages with parents well. It provides them with good information to explain the school's work and to help their children at home. Parents are pleased with the way the school looks after and educates their children.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' progress in writing is not as rapid as in reading and mathematics.
- In Reception, staff do not encourage children enough to explore and find out things for themselves when playing.
- Not enough teaching is yet outstanding. The most-able pupils sometimes find work too easy.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 32 lessons or parts of lessons, including eight which were observed jointly with senior school leaders, and the operation of the Primary Support Unit. They also looked at pupils' written work in English, mathematics and other subjects.
- Meetings were held with the Chair and two other members of the Governing Body, the headteacher and other school leaders, and a discussion was held with a representative of the local authority by telephone.
- Inspectors spoke formally to two groups of pupils, and informally with other pupils in lessons and around the school. An inspector listened to other pupils reading and talked to them about their reading habits.
- Several of the school's documents were examined. These included: the school's own evaluation of its performance and its development plan; the school's information about pupils' progress and the support given to pupils who speak English as an additional language, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs; evidence about the quality of teaching; and records relating to behaviour, safeguarding and attendance.
- Inspectors took account of 150 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View), two letters received from parents and the views expressed by parents as they arrived to pick up their children. They analysed 40 questionnaires returned by staff.

Inspection team

James McVeigh, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Margaret Louisy

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Full report

Information about this school

- Springmead is larger than the average-sized primary school. There are two classes in each year group from Nursery to Year 6 except in Year 1, where there are three classes.
- The large majority of pupils come from a White British background and the remainder from a wide range of different ethnic backgrounds. Fewer pupils than average speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium (extra government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, in local authority care or from a family with a parent in the armed forces) is below average.
- The proportions of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action, and through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs, are below the national averages.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- The school manages a behavioural support unit, the Primary Support Base (PSB), financed by the local authority. Currently, there are three pupils attending the base, one of whom is also registered with another local school. Also, there is a privately run breakfast and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve pupils' achievement in writing further by encouraging them to practise writing longer pieces of work in different genres.
- Improve achievement in Reception by making full use of conversations with children, when they are engaged in their own chosen activities, to encourage them to explore and find out things for themselves.
- Make more teaching outstanding by ensuring that lesson activities are adapted to fully stretch the most able pupils.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Children get a very good start at Springmead. Adults are caring and model expected behaviour consistently, including how to treat one another, so very positive relationships develop quickly among children and with adults. Children feel safe and are happy to come to school, and parents are very pleased with the care and support children receive.
- Children begin school in the nursery showing a typical level of development for their age in all areas of learning. In the clean, bright and well-resourced nursery space, children become engrossed in the interesting activities provided. Teaching is good. Adults model language well and interact regularly with children, questioning and encouraging them in their chosen activity, to extend learning further. Consequently, children make good progress and their confidence and speaking skills develop well.
- Children make similar progress in the Reception Year. However, during sessions when they can choose what they want to do, they have less choice to explore their own interests and there is less interaction with adults. More children leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with a good level of development than the national average.
- Pupils make good progress in all subjects in Key Stage 1 and reach standards above the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Phonics (the sounds letters make) is taught well and pupils develop good skills in spelling and pronouncing unknown words. In the recent phonics screening checks, pupils performed better than the national average and those who speak English as an additional language did particularly well.
- In Key Stage 2, pupils generally continue to make good progress in all subjects. They reached standards above the national averages in reading and mathematics and did much better than others nationally in English grammar, punctuation and spelling. Standards in writing were in line with national figures and progress was slower. Pupils do not develop their skills well enough through extensive writing for different purposes and in different subjects.
- Current school data show that pupils are now making better progress in all years and are expected to do even better in all subjects in the 2014 tests. The school is effective in encouraging reading. Workshops, reading diaries and guided reading sessions at school give parents good support to help children at home. Pupils read widely with enjoyment and interest.
- Pupils develop good handwriting skills and a wide vocabulary. A pupil in a Year 5 English lesson described a dinner table setting succinctly as 'an elegant mix of Victorian and Edwardian cutlery' during an activity to produce an estate agent's brochure to sell a 'wizard's house'. Pupils learn to speak clearly and confidently in front of the whole class or during paired discussions.
- Pupils supported by the pupil premium benefit from effective academic help through one-to-one and small group work and full access to trips and clubs. In 2013, those in Year 6 attained as highly as similar pupils nationally but not as well as their classmates. The attainment gap in English and mathematics combined was around three terms. However, a high proportion of this group also had special educational needs that held back their achievement. School data show that the gap for current pupils has narrowed to around one term and they are making good progress, in line with others.
- More-able pupils achieve well. They reach similar standards to this group nationally in reading

and writing, and do even better in mathematics.

- The school uses its own expertise and external specialists well to ensure that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are identified accurately, receive appropriate extra help and have their progress checked regularly. Consequently, such pupils make good progress throughout the school. Well-trained teaching assistants, including those skilled in managing behaviour, provide good and well-focused support. Pupils in the PSB, a unit to help them manage their behaviour, do well and are soon integrated into mainstream classes.
- The small group of pupils who speak English as an additional language represent a large number of different languages. They also receive effective support and make good progress. In 2013, they reached higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than their classmates and their peers nationally.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Teachers mark pupils' written work regularly and keep a close check on their achievements to make sure no-one is in danger of falling behind. Pupils respond well to teachers' advice. Short, regular 'guided improvement' sessions enable pupils to consolidate their understanding of previous learning activities. Pupils know their national curriculum levels and targets for improvement. They understand the colour-coded marking system and can follow their own progress in their 'next steps' booklets.
- Pupils have regular opportunities to share their ideas with one another during 'partner talk'. They usually listen to one another and their teacher thoughtfully. Teachers often question pupils skilfully, pausing to give pupils time for reflection and using follow-up questions to extend understanding further. Pupils in a Year 6 science lesson were led into an interesting discussion about sky diving and stimulated into thinking about forces, air resistance and floating.
- Teachers show that they have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and productivity. They model what they expect pupils to be able to achieve clearly and often involve pupils in developing success criteria for the activity, so they know what they have to do and how to do it. For example, in a Year 5 mathematics lesson, pupils worked with their teacher to develop a good method to put decimal numbers in order.
- Teachers and teaching assistants manage pupils' behaviour very well. Little teaching time is wasted correcting poor behaviour. Teaching assistants generally provide good support for identified pupils, helping them when necessary while encouraging them to do things for themselves.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, teachers plan interesting, fun things for children to do based on a good knowledge of earlier learning. In a lively session in the nursery, children counted, sang, practised saying the days of the week and linked their sounds to the names of children in the group.
- Pupils find the activities teachers plan for them to be interesting and engaging. Year 5 pupils were very enthusiastic in describing how they had made pizza and its packaging when they were learning about nets, calculations and advertising. Teachers make good use of assessment information to make sure tasks build on pupils' prior learning, often in the form of challenges of increasing difficulty that pupils can choose from. However, sometimes the activities planned for higher ability pupils are too easy for them.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They get along with each other and their teachers really well. Pupils know the school rules and are keen to earn house points for good behaviour. They know their behaviour affects how well they learn.
- Pupils have good attitudes to learning. They listen carefully to instructions, engage with the tasks set quickly and persevere with them. When working in groups, they cooperate well with one another, discussing their ideas sensibly and sharing roles and resources fairly. Pupils say that most lessons run smoothly and teachers rarely have to tell anyone off. Just occasionally, when activities are too easy, pupils can become less attentive.
- Around the school, pupils are polite and courteous to both one another and adults. During morning registration, Year 3 pupils said good morning to the next child on the register, setting a positive atmosphere for the rest of the morning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are well supervised in the playground and have a good range of resources to play with. The 'playground leaders' help organise games and equipment, while 'playground buddies' keep an eye out for anyone sitting on the 'buddy' bench so they can organise someone to play with them.
- Pupils have a good range of responsibilities they can take on, for example as representatives for the school council or 'eco-buddies'. The school council is regularly involved in charity events and recommending changes to the school, and 'eco-buddies' recently entered a competition for schools on designing an energy conservation poster. Year 6 pupils are proud to act as 'buddies' to Reception children and help them settle in.
- For their age, pupils have a good understanding of bullying and know the different forms it can take. They say that bullying is uncommon and their teachers would 'sort it' out quickly if it did occur. The school's well-maintained records show that the number of incidents of misbehaviour, including bullying, is low. Parents, pupils and governors say that behaviour is good or better.
- The school promotes health and safety well. Pupils can talk confidently about how to stay healthy by taking regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. They have had lessons, including talks from the police, on how to stay safe, for example when crossing the road and when using the internet. Teachers and other adults are meticulous in following child protection guidelines closely and assessing health and safety risks, for example when going on trips. Pupils feel safe and secure at school.
- Attendance is above average and punctuality is good. The school monitors attendance closely and promotes the need for high attendance successfully to parents. Pupils enjoy coming to school to have fun and meet their friends. They like their teachers and feel cared for and valued.

The leadership and management are good

- Senior leaders are good professional role models for others. They constantly seek to develop good practice and have established productive links with secondary and teaching schools, for example, to improve teachers' expertise and provide wider learning opportunities for higher ability pupils. The headteacher is a national leader of education and supports other schools and their leadership teams.
- The senior leadership team and governors have high expectations, shared by staff, encapsulated

in the school's motto: 'Believe, Achieve, Succeed!'

- Pupils' progress is checked regularly. Effective support is provided for any who show signs of slipping behind to ensure all have an equal chance to succeed without discrimination. Disadvantaged pupils have extra support, for example through writing tutorials, a range of enrichment activities and a homework club.
- The quality of teaching is checked regularly, including through lesson observations, looking at pupils' work in books and looking at teachers' assessment guidance books, which chart the progress of each pupil lesson by lesson. Teachers are given challenging annual targets to meet that focus on pupils' progress, the school development plan and their own career aspirations.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have good opportunities to develop their skills. Good use is made of the training opportunities provided by a teaching school and the local authority. Teachers are taking part in ongoing research-based projects, for example, on how effective support interventions are, and some have seen lessons in outstanding schools. Staff meetings revolve around sharing the best teaching practice.
- Teachers new to the profession are pleased with the good support they receive. Their regular meetings with their mentors inspire confidence and help them to focus on the most important areas for improvement. Subject leaders can extend their experience by leading school initiatives, for example in gaining art or eco school status, and are fully involved in monitoring the progress of pupils and the quality of teaching.
- The Early Years Foundation Stage is well managed. The children's achievements are recorded well, and the resulting information is used to plan activities at the right level of difficulty to ensure good progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are catered for particularly well. Their progress is followed closely and adults are given a good deal of relevant training to assure the effectiveness of their support. Pupils who have significant behavioural concerns make particularly good progress in learning to manage their own behaviour because the PSB is led and managed so well.
- The curriculum develops pupils' language and mathematical skills well. Pupils like using computer technology to help them in their learning. Visits are used effectively to kick start topics, such as trips to supermarkets for the 'Food, glorious food' topic. Further enrichment comes from a good range of trips, for example to see *The Lion King* when studying Africa.
- Music and sport are strong features. For example, a Year 5 class showed great confidence and competence in a musical performance involving singing, drumming and complex clapping. The primary sports funding is being used effectively to promote more participation in sport. Links with a secondary school and a sports college are helping to improve teachers' expertise in different sports and to develop more intra-school competitions, including paralympic games.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well, including through lessons and assemblies, fund-raising events for charity and special days for the whole school community. For example, 'Language Day' is an opportunity for pupils to celebrate their cultural background through dress and share their traditional food, such as Indian sweets.
- Parents appreciate the work the school does in involving them. Regular workshops and model lessons provide valuable support for parents to understand how their children learn and to help children at home, for example with reading. Pupils write invitations to their parents, and this is

particularly effective in ensuring good attendance.

■ The governance of the school:

- The governing body is very active in all areas of the school's work. The termly governors' challenge for pupils, such as one on code breaking, help governors to see the impact of improvements. The governing body is led and organised well, and has a wide range of skills and experience to call upon. Governors are well informed, including through their own well-planned visits to lessons and to meet school leaders. They have a good understanding of performance data and strongly support the school in its drive for improvement, but they are also robust in challenging the school to explain and defend its plans to improve pupils' progress.
- With the support of the local authority, governors set ambitious targets for the headteacher and check that teachers receive appropriate rewards for their work. They ensure the school is financially sound and that money is used effectively to support pupils' good progress, including the pupil premium and primary sports funding. They also make sure safeguarding arrangements meet current national requirements.

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	117325
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	431254

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	484
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Victoria DeNaeyer
Headteacher	Judith Sumner
Date of previous school inspection	20 January 2009
Telephone number	01707 331508
Fax number	01707 334562
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