

Springcroft Primary School

Grindley Lane, Blythe Bridge, Stoke-on-Trent, ST11 9JS

Inspection dates 18–19 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	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

- Not enough pupils are exceeding expected levels of progress in mathematics or writing by the end of Year 6.
- A lack of challenge for more-able pupils is resulting in too few pupils achieving the higher levels at the end of Years 2 and 6, particularly for boys in writing and girls in mathematics.
- Variations in the quality of teaching mean that pupils have not made consistently good progress through the school, although this is now improving.
- The quality of marking is inconsistent across subjects and across the school. It does not always tell pupils how to improve. Teachers do not always ensure pupils respond to marking and so raise the quality of their work.
- The checks made by leaders and governors on the quality of teaching and achievement have not been frequent or rigorous enough to iron out inconsistencies in teaching and pupils' progress.
- Subject leaders have had few opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and to evaluate its impact on pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- Good teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage ensures that children progress quickly and are well equipped with the skills needed for Year 1.
- The school works very effectively with parents and the wider community to ensure all pupils are cared for exceptionally well.
- Good teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) is helping to improve pupils' early literacy skills.
- Relationships are very strong. There are many opportunities for pupils and parents to raise concerns and this makes the pupils feel safe.
- Pupils behave well, are extremely proud of their school, and are keen to learn and work together.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes. They observed 14 lessons, four of them jointly with the headteacher. They also examined closely the work in pupils' books.
- Inspectors held discussions with pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors and an officer representing the local authority.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents covering safeguarding and child protection, attendance, behaviour, pupils' progress and attainment, the work of the governing body, the school improvement plan, performance management documentation and the monitoring of teaching quality.
- The team consulted the Parent View website, where 82 parents and carers had posted responses to the online questionnaire.
- Inspectors analysed questionnaires which had been completed by staff, and two letters and one email which had been received from parents.
- During this inspection, inspectors asked additional questions designed to ascertain the school's view of the impact and effectiveness of local authority services to support school improvement. This information will contribute to work being carried out by Ofsted to assess the use, quality and impact of those services.

Inspection team

Mark Mallender, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Ian Hart

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the proportion who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils known to eligible for the pupil premium is well below the national average. This is additional government funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care, and those with a parent in the armed forces.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is well below average. The proportion of these pupils supported at school action plus, or with a statement of special educational needs, is well below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school by making sure that:
 - marking shows pupils how to improve their work, particularly in mathematics,
 - pupils are expected to correct their work so that it gets better
 - work is pitched at the right level of difficulty for pupils, particularly the most able, so they do not waste time covering work they already know or can do.
- In writing and mathematics, make sure more pupils exceed expected progress by:
 - giving teachers information about what pupils know and can do, so that they can plan and provide work at the right level for all groups of pupils, and particularly the more able.
- Strengthen leadership by making sure that:
 - leaders carry out regular checks, through visits to lessons and reviewing pupils' work, to challenge underperformance and help teachers to improve their practice
 - governors make full use of all information to regularly challenge the school's performance.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Pupils' achievement varies, particularly not enough more-able pupils reach the standards they are capable of. The proportion of pupils exceeding nationally expected progress in reading and mathematics is below average. The proportion has been well below average in writing.
- Boys outperform girls in school by far more than is seen nationally. In recent years, no girls have achieved the higher Level 3 in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1. Boys have also achieved better in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2, although current data show that boys and girls are making similar progress.
- There has also been too much difference between the standard of boys and girls in writing at the higher levels. No boys in recent years have achieved the higher Level 3 in writing at the end of Key Stage 1. In 2013, no boys achieved the higher Level 5 in writing by the end of Key Stage 2. Current school data show that progress rates in each year group are similar for both boys and girls.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve particularly for the most able pupils, who do not make enough progress. This is why too few pupils reach the higher levels at the end of each key stage. The school does not compare favourably against national figures at these higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics over time, although currently more pupils than in recent years are on track to attain the highest levels by the end of Key Stage 2.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving, but it is inconsistent through the school. Most make expected progress, but too few make more than expected progress because they are not challenged enough.
- Children enter Reception with attainment which is broadly typical for their age. Progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is good and the current children are well on track to reach above-average standards by the end of the year.
- Progress of all groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language and pupils from minority ethnic groups, is improving. In the last two terms, all groups of pupils in school have made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Very few pupils are supported by the pupil premium. The standards they reach in reading, writing and mathematics and the progress they make are not significantly different from those of their classmates by the end of Year 6.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- There is not enough challenge for different groups of pupils and teachers' expectations are not high enough. School leaders are working to change this and are beginning to have an impact. Expectations are rising and this year, for the first time, some pupils have aspirations to reach Level 6. These recent improvements have not yet had a significant impact on achievement.
- Assessments of pupils' attainment are not carried out often enough. This means that teachers do not have a sufficiently accurate picture of what different groups of pupils can and cannot do. As

a result, they cannot consistently plan tasks for pupils at the right level of difficulty.

- On too many occasions, all the pupils in a class are given the same work, so that some pupils struggle, and the most able find tasks too easy. Where learning was more effective, pupils had clear time frames as to when tasks were to be completed, and teachers checked regularly to see how the pupils were progressing.
- Teachers usually question the pupils well to determine their understanding and to extend their learning. However, the marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. Literacy books have good examples of marking that shows pupils how to improve. However, even here, teachers do not check to make sure pupils respond to their comments and make their work better. In mathematics and other subjects, pupils are too seldom shown how to improve.
- In learning phonics, pupils find the activities interesting and try hard. Teachers show secure subject knowledge and they support and challenge pupils well, ensuring that they make good progress. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children were able to write, 'Did you have a good time?' This reflected the current 'oo' focus in teaching. Children were highly accurate in identifying initial and end sounds in words.
- When pupils know what is expected of them, they show they can make their own decisions over the level of challenge they are about to embark on. This was seen in a Year 5 lesson where the pupils were writing a conversation between characters taken from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. There were high expectations regarding what the pupils 'must do', 'should do' and 'could do', with a further 'challenge' once these were completed. Pupils knew exactly what they needed to achieve and set about it in an industrious way. Furthermore, pupils could talk confidently about what level they were working at, and what was required of them to get to the next level.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They are polite, well-mannered and make the school a very inviting and safe place where everyone is welcome. They show high levels of respect for each other and the adults in the school. In partnership with the whole school community, they work together collaboratively as a team.
- Pupils are immensely proud of their school and relish the many opportunities for them to take on positions of responsibilities. They speak with pride about being a prefect, a school councillor or taking on one of the many 'duties' that are on offer.
- Pupils of all ages work hard when expectations are high and take a great pride in their learning. They are attentive and want to achieve. This positive attitude to their learning and the resilience that they often show in the face of difficulties are bringing about the increasing levels of progress currently being seen throughout the school.
- 'Above all, Springcroft is a community – the school and staff provide an extension of warmth, care and love that the children are accustomed to in their home life.' This comment, which one parent made, echoed the many similar comments parents and carers made to inspectors.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils are taught well how to keep themselves safe. Although pupils report that bullying is extremely rare, they are well aware of the different types of bullying, including internet bullying, and confidently report that bullying in any form would not be tolerated by teachers. They understand the importance of e-safety.

- Attendance is above average. Pupils feel valued and listened to and thoroughly enjoy coming to school. As an additional opportunity to give more pupils a voice in school, the headteacher has recently started 'Tea with the Headteacher' every Wednesday morning. In small groups, over the course of the year, every child will have sat down for 20 minutes with the headteacher for a 'chat'. This is an opportunity for both ideas and worries to be shared.
- The school gives good support to pupils whose circumstances may make them particularly vulnerable. It uses outside agencies very well to support them in doing this.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders have not been checking on the quality of teaching or the progress of pupils rigorously enough to enable them to act quickly and hold teachers to account for pupils' achievement. They have not considered pupils' progress enough when making judgements about the quality of teaching. This has meant that the school's evaluation of the quality of teaching has been too generous.
- Senior leaders, particularly the headteacher, have been instrumental in creating and maintaining the warm and happy atmosphere which so many parents and pupils comment about. The pupils' well-being and happiness are at the heart of every decision that is made, and this is widely recognised.
- The government sports funding for primary schools has been used effectively, for example on specialist coaching to enhance pupils' physical skills and well-being. The school has suitable plans to measure the impact of this initiative.
- Some changes in the school are beginning to accelerate pupils' progress. For example, the staffing structure and the governing body have been reorganised, and a new tracking system has been introduced to give teachers a greater understanding of the progress their pupils are making. While it is still too early to comment fully on the impact of these measures, over the last two terms, outcomes for pupils are improving.
- Leaders, particularly the headteacher, provide many opportunities for pupils to voice their concerns. The commitment to keeping all pupils safe in school is reflected in robust safeguarding and child protection procedures. The school is a very safe place and pupils and parents echo this view.
- The school provides many and varied activities which enrich the lives of its pupils. It promotes pupils' social, moral and spiritual development well. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about experiences they have had both in the classroom and out of school, such as trips to the theatre and down mines.
- The local authority has not provided effective support and challenge to help the school improve over time. It was aware that achievement required improvement and visited the school as a result of analysing achievement data, which caused some concern. The school found the visit useful, but there was a lack of urgency in addressing areas of improvement and initiating the necessary support. Furthermore the local authority has not challenged the school robustly enough about the lack of progress made by some groups of pupils in key areas in recent years. The headteacher has appreciated the guidance given by the local authority's human resources (HR) department. The local authority has not been able to directly impact on the quality of teaching and learning either through working directly with teachers or arranging the necessary

support.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is committed to the school but, because senior leaders do not analyse the information on pupils' progress or check teaching frequently or well enough, it has not had an up-to-date and accurate picture of pupils' achievement or the quality teaching. As a result, governors have not been able to hold staff to account.
- The governing body is rejuvenating itself with personnel who have a wider set of skills. There are now governors who understand internal and external school data and know what further information to ask for. Increasingly, they are asking more challenging questions and understand that there is a need for more and frequent rigour.
- The governors are diligent in their management of finances and resources. They understand and help make decisions about how the pupil premium is being spent and the impact of this. The governing body and school leaders ensure teachers' pay is linked to their performance.

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	124163
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	443873

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	213
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Stephen Jeffries
Headteacher	Helen Lewis
Date of previous school inspection	10 May 2011
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