

Seven Fields Primary School

Leigh Road, Penhill, Swindon, SN2 5DE

Inspection dates 27–28 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	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 make good progress from very low starting points to reach broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- Teaching is good, with some that is outstanding. Teachers have strong relationships with pupils and plan lessons that help to make learning interesting.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress because learning experiences are stimulating and engaging.
- Typically, pupils are safe and behaviour is good. This makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.
- The school makes good use of teaching assistants to ensure that pupils, including those pupils who need extra help, learn well.
- The curriculum provides pupils with a wide range of experiences, including international trips, which promote their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well.
- The headteacher, ably assisted by the deputy headteacher, other school leaders and the governing body, has been highly effective in leading changes that have resulted in improvements in teaching and achievement.
- The governing body has an accurate view of the school's performance, and supports and challenges the school well.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Work is occasionally too easy for the more able and does not challenge their thinking.
- Information on the school's performance is not summarised well enough to make it easy to see what works well and what could be improved.
- Teachers' marking does not always tell pupils how to improve their work, and some teachers do not check that pupils act on the advice they are given.
- Some new leaders need to develop further their understanding of how well pupils are learning in relation to expectations nationally in English and mathematics.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed 25 lessons or parts of lessons. Several lessons were observed jointly with the headteacher. Inspectors also listened to pupils from different year groups reading.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and other members of staff, members of the governing body and a group of pupils. The inspectors also talked informally to pupils and staff around the school.
- The inspectors took account of 13 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire (Parent View) and 31 responses to the staff questionnaire. They also looked at the school's own surveys and letters from parents.
- Discussions were held with parents at the beginning of the school day. Telephone conversations were also undertaken with two parents.
- The inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's data about pupils' current progress. In addition, the inspectors looked at documents relating to safeguarding, governance, behaviour and attendance. Inspectors looked at a range of other evidence, including displays, the school's website and evidence representing the school's wider achievements beyond the classroom.

Inspection team

Sonja Joseph, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

David Shears

Additional inspector

John Worgan

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is an above-average-sized primary school.
- The majority of pupils come from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils for whom the school receives the pupil premium is well above average. This is additional government funding for particular groups, such as pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, those in local authority care or children from service families.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well above average.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2012. The school was judged to be outstanding prior to the academy conversion. It has retained the same name. There have been several changes of staff since the academy opened.
- The school did not meet the government's current floor standards in 2013, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics. It is on track to meet floor standards this year.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of outstanding teaching by ensuring that:
 - teachers set work at the right level of difficulty so that all pupils, especially the more able, make the best progress possible
 - marking consistently provides pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work
 - teachers regularly check that pupils act on the advice they are given so that they make more rapid gains in their learning.
- Strengthen further the quality of leadership and management by:
 - summarising more clearly the information collected on the effectiveness of the school's work so that it is easy to identify trends, strengths and weaknesses
 - developing the skills of new leaders in comparing information about pupils' learning to national expectations, to check that all pupils are making sufficiently rapid progress in reading, writing and mathematics.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils is good

- Most children enter Nursery and Reception with skill and knowledge levels well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, literacy and language skills. Children make good progress through Nursery and Reception. There is a strong focus on developing basic skills and establishing clear routines for learning and behaviour, which prepares children well for the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils continue to make good progress across Key Stage 1 and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is improving, so that it is closer to national figures.
- Despite standards at the end of Year 6 being typically broadly average, there was a dip in 2013 and some pupils did not make the progress expected, particularly in reading. This was due in part to some pupils joining the school at other than normal times, and to weaker teaching in the past. The school's information about how well pupils learn, confirmed by the quality of pupils' current work and their learning in lessons, shows that most pupils are currently on track to reach nationally expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In writing, pupils learn well because they have increased opportunities to write at length for a variety of purposes and audiences. However, teachers do not always check that pupils have responded to advice given on how to improve their work. This limits their ability to progress further in their learning.
- Pupils are making good progress in reading because information on how well pupils are learning is being used more efficiently to move pupils quickly on to new work that is matched well to their levels of ability. As a result, an increasing number of pupils are in line to achieve at the higher Level 5.
- Pupils' understanding of the sounds that letters make (phonics) is currently better than indicated by the Year 1 phonics screening check, where it was below average in 2012 and 2013. In the Year 2 re-takes, all pupils achieved scores which were above national figures. Recent changes to the organisation of the teaching of phonics is rapidly improving pupils' skills across all year groups and pupils in Year 1 are currently on track to achieve above-average results.
- More-able pupils generally make good progress. Some teachers do not always set work that stretches their thinking and challenges them to make more rapid gains in their learning.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds and pupils new to learning English make similar progress to their classmates because the school provides appropriately focused support and tasks for them.
- In 2013, results showed that the attainment of those eligible for the pupil premium was over a year behind that of their peers in writing and mathematics, and nearly two years behind in reading. School information shows that currently there is approximately one term's difference in the achievement of these pupils and that of their classmates. This shows the school's strong commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all pupils.

The quality of teaching is good

- Teaching is good because most lessons are planned to interest pupils and provide them with tasks that make them think and work hard. Checks on pupils' work in their books confirm that pupils are making good progress.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children achieve well because staff plan a wide range of interesting activities across all areas of learning, with a particular focus on developing children's language, communication and early reading skills. As a result, children quickly develop a good understanding of books and stories.

- Reading is taught increasingly well. In daily guided reading sessions, pupils who understand their work are moved on to new learning quickly, so that they make fast progress in their understanding of the meaning of words. This also develops their range of vocabulary well, particularly for those who speak English as an additional language.
- Good teaching helps younger pupils understand the link between letters and sounds so that they tackle unfamiliar words with confidence when reading.
- In mathematics, opportunities for pupils to work together to solve problems help them to make good progress in their understanding of numbers and calculation. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 developed a good knowledge and understanding of addition and subtraction through working out the correct answers to word problems of increasing difficulty. This successfully developed their ability to reason and explain their learning so that they could draw logical conclusions from their work.
- The school makes good use of teaching assistants to ensure that all pupils learn well, including those who need extra help.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers' skilful questioning actively involves pupils in group discussion and develops their speaking and listening skills well. Pupils are confident to ask questions of their teachers because relationships in the school are strong. For example, in a mixed Year 5/6 English lesson, pupils made rapid progress in their knowledge and understanding of vocabulary because questions challenged them very well to recall and use the terms correctly in their written work.
- Some teachers use marking exceptionally well to tell pupils what they need to do to improve further. This is not consistent practice among all teachers and they do not check often enough that pupils have acted on their advice. Consequently, pupils sometimes repeat their mistakes, particularly in written work, which slows down their progress.
- On occasion, work set by teachers is not always at the right level of difficulty to challenge pupils, particularly the most able, to make more rapid gains in their learning.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are keen to learn and say they enjoy their learning. They are polite and friendly. During the inspection, they were happy to talk to the inspectors about their work and life at school.
- Children develop in confidence in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are good opportunities for them to develop their social skills, for example, in their role play in the 'post office' where they learn to take turns and listen to each other.
- Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Pupils who may be more vulnerable benefit from a wide range of support from specialist staff and outside agencies.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils say they feel very safe in their school. Pupils are aware of different types of bullying, including cyber bullying, and say that although there was some bullying last year, it is now very rare. School records confirm this and pupils are confident that any difficulties between them would be quickly dealt with. Some parents expressed concerns over behaviour and bullying. School records and observations of learning show any incidents of poor behaviour are managed well.
- Most parents who spoke to inspectors and replied to the online survey agreed that their children are safe, happy and well looked after.
- Attendance is improving because the school works effectively with specialist staff and outside agencies to support those pupils whose circumstances may make them more vulnerable.
- Behaviour is not outstanding because, in some lessons, pupils need help to settle to their work or lose interest in learning when work is too easy for them.

The leadership and management are good

- The headteacher provides effective and determined leadership for the school. She is well supported by senior leaders and together they have introduced new ways of working to help raise achievement. They are dedicated and determined in their drive and ambition for the achievement of every pupil to be outstanding.
- The school's evaluation of how well it is doing is accurate. Leaders have a good understanding of the strengths of the school and what they need to do to improve further. They place a clear focus on improving pupils' achievement and have used the expertise of external consultants very effectively to provide high quality training and support for staff. This is raising the quality of teaching and learning. School records and rigorous checks on teaching and learning by senior staff confirm this.
- Appropriate plans are in place to improve the school further. Senior staff rightly recognise that new middle leaders need to sharpen their knowledge and understanding of pupils' progress in relation to national expectations for English and mathematics to ensure all different groups of pupils make sufficiently rapid gains in their learning.
- Information on aspects of school performance are not all summarised well enough to provide a clear, concise overview of trends, strengths and weaknesses. As a result, teachers do not always set work at the right level of difficulty and this can slow pupils' progress, particularly that of the more able.
- Arrangements for managing staff are well organised, with clear links to performance, salaries and responsibilities.
- The curriculum makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Opportunities for pupils widen their artistic and cultural awareness. These include exciting outdoor activities, performances at local theatres, work with artists and residential trips to Spain where they learn alongside local pupils. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- Additional funding (pupil premium) is spent on specific targeted programmes in English and mathematics for eligible pupils. In this way, potential discrimination and underachievement are identified quickly and tackled successfully. This has helped senior leaders allocate resources effectively and reduce the gaps in achievement between eligible pupils and their classmates.
- The school is using the new primary school sports funding well. It has employed specialist teachers and sports coaches to train staff and increase the range of competitive sport and physical activities on offer. Consequently, all pupils participate keenly in physical exercise, resulting in a positive impact on their health and physical well-being.
- The school ensures that all pupils are safe and that safeguarding requirements are fully in place. It works with a wide range of agencies and specialist staff to ensure that the needs of vulnerable pupils are well met.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand information on how well pupils learn and check to see that the school tracks the progress of pupils regularly to make sure none fall behind. Members of the governing body have worked closely with the headteacher to make sure that the achievement of pupils is a priority for improvement. As a result of regular training, they are able to hold the school to account well for its performance. Governors are involved in pay decisions to reward good teaching and have taken action where performance needed improvement. They set targets for the headteacher and review these regularly. Governors are fully aware of how the school is spending additional funding and the impact this has on pupils' achievement.

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	138005
Local authority	Swindon
Inspection number	441137

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	320
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Eileen Roberts
Headteacher	Zita McCormick
Date of previous school inspection	27–28 June 2011
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