

Spring Lane Primary School

Spring Lane, Northampton, NN1 2JW

Inspection dates 10–11 June 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not applicable
	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

- Although most pupils are making the progress expected of them, too few make good progress.
- Sometimes teachers set work that is too easy for some pupils and too hard for others.
- The performance targets set for teachers are not sufficiently rigorous.
- Pupils' insecure knowledge of letter sounds has been holding back their achievement in reading and writing but with clear signs of improvement now in place.
- Some pupils' limited knowledge of number bonds and multiplication tables slows down their speed of working in mathematics.
- Marking of pupils' books does not help pupils to improve their work enough.
- Leaders have not yet fully developed their skills in evaluating teaching and raising standards. Feedback for staff is not sufficiently detailed to help to improve their skills.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour and their knowledge of safety are good.
- Strong links with parents and the children's centre reflect a deep commitment to the pupils' welfare.
- The school is at the centre of the local community and provides much support for families. It helps children who speak little or no English to learn English quickly.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, including pupils in the speech and language unit, make good progress in overcoming their difficulties.
- Governors make a good contribution to school life, and support and challenge leaders. Their visits give them a good understanding about the quality of teaching and learning.

Information about this inspection

- Twenty-four lessons or parts of lessons were observed. One was jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Discussions took place with the headteacher, various members of staff, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils.
- A telephone discussion was held with a member of the academy’s sponsors.
- The inspectors heard pupils read and observed the teaching of reading skills.
- The inspectors sampled pupils’ work in different year groups, examined records of pupils’ progress, and read the school’s evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses. A range of other documentation was examined, including that relating to safeguarding and improvement planning.
- The views of staff were sought and 32 responded to a written questionnaire.
- The inspectors looked at the 18 responses on Parent View, the government’s website for parents’ views about their children’s school.

Inspection team

Peter Sudworth, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Lynne Thorogood

Additional Inspector

Helen Jones

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school. It is growing, with two classes in each year group from Reception to Year 3 and single classes in Years 4 to 6. Most of the children in the 40-place nursery continue on to the Reception classes.
- The school became an academy in November 2012, sponsored by the Collaborative Academies Trust.
- Almost three-quarters of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups. Nearly two-thirds speak English as an additional language, and 43 pupils are at a very early stage of learning English.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional government funding for pupils who are looked after by the local authority or known to be eligible for free school meals, is above the national average.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported at school action is around the national average. The proportion supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also around the average.
- It is not possible to judge if the school meets the government's floor standards, because as yet it has no published data.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave partway through their primary school education is much higher than usually found. Between one quarter and three-tenths of the pupils changes annually.
- The school has close ties with the separately managed children's centre on the same site.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupil with special educational needs for 12 pupils which caters mainly for children from Nursery to Year 1 with speech and language difficulties. The children are integrated into the main school and are occasionally withdrawn to the unit for special sessions to help with their difficulties.
- The school has its own breakfast and after-school club.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching further by:
 - paying more attention to the needs of different ability groups and building the work more carefully on what pupils already know and can do
 - using marking more effectively to help pupils to improve their work.
- Improve achievement by:
 - matching reading materials appropriately to pupils' capabilities
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to write for themselves and think of their own ideas
 - challenging pupils more effectively in mathematics and ensuring that they have a quick recall of number bonds and multiplication tables
 - improving pupils' skills in mental mathematics.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - reports on lesson observations fully support improvement in teachers' practice
 - targets set for teachers in their annual reviews are sufficiently demanding and challenging.

Inspection judgements

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Current data, work in books and discussion with pupils shows that pupils are making the progress expected of them but too few are making good progress. Not enough pupils have reached the higher levels in the past in reading and writing. Work has not always been of a suitable level in mathematics to ensure pupils, including the most able, made good progress.
- Pupils' attainment on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes is well below the levels typical for this age, especially in communication and language. Attainment is below average at the end of Reception. Pupils are making the progress expected of them, in Key Stage 1, but are still below average in reading, writing and mathematics skills by the end of Year 2.
- Pupils' knowledge of phonics (the sounds that letters make) has not been secure enough and this has affected pupils' reading and writing skills. This is shown in below average results in the national screening of Year 1 pupils. Much improvement is now apparent because of better teaching strategies. The grouping of pupils by ability is accelerating their progress.
- In mathematics, some pupils are not quick enough in calculating because their mental skills are not sufficiently well developed, including their knowledge of number and multiplication tables.
- Although attainment at the end of Year 6 is below average, it is improving. While pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 requires improvement, current school data indicate that it is improving and the school is making good strides forward. All year groups are making improved rates of progress in reading and writing, but progress in mathematics, although in line with expectations, is slower. Pupils in Key Stage 2, including the most able, are now making good progress in reading and writing. Pupils pay good attention to handwriting and take care with their work.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are currently making good progress because their difficulties are quickly recognised and extra help and support are provided for them. Children in the unit for speech and language difficulties make good progress in overcoming their difficulties due to the specialist help they receive.
- Pupils who are new to speaking English also make good gains in their use of the language because of effective introductory arrangements to help them integrate and begin to understand English. Those who speak English as an additional language but are not in the early stages of learning English make similar progress to other pupils.
- School data indicate that pupils who have been at the school since the start make much better progress in all their learning than those who join at other times. Those supported by the pupil premium are making good progress in Key Stage 2 and have closed the attainment gap with other pupils in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Despite improvements made to teaching since the academy opened, it is not yet good enough to promote consistently good progress in the key areas of reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils do not yet have enough opportunities to write at length. Teachers do not always match their reading ages to suitable text levels of reading books. Consequently some find them too hard and others too easy.

- Phonics teaching has not always been good enough to help the pupils develop their writing, reading and spelling skills and especially for able pupils. While improvements are evident in the new arrangements, such as much smaller teaching groups, occasionally some pupils are taught sounds they already know while some are moved on before they are able to use a sound confidently.
- In mathematics lessons, pupils are not always challenged enough. Pupils are often slow to calculate mentally because their knowledge of number and multiplication tables is insecure and there is no whole-school strategy to improve pupils' mental skills.
- Marking is generally up to date but comments are limited and do not help the pupils to improve their work sufficiently well, especially in writing, including spelling.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils enable lessons to continue uninterrupted and in a calm atmosphere which supports learning. Teachers develop positive attitudes in pupils and engage them in interesting activities.
- Learning resources are used well and are plentiful in mathematics to help pupils' understanding. In a Year 2 lesson about shape, lots of shapes were available so that pupils could identify their different characteristics.
- Pupils know what their learning is to be about because teachers discuss this with them before they start work. Their interest is retained through opportunities such as talking about an idea in pairs.
- The adults in the Early Years Foundation Stage encourage children to speak regularly. As a result, they make good progress in understanding English. Specialist support for young children who have speech problems helps them to overcome their difficulties well.
- Lessons and materials are well prepared so that pupils can begin their work quickly when they are assigned to their tasks.
- Teaching assistants are used effectively to support learning. They know exactly what they are expected to do when they work with individuals and groups.
- The teaching of the pupils in the special unit is good because they make good use of expert help to assist with pupils' speech and pupils make good progress in overcoming their particular difficulties.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

- The behaviour of pupils is good. They show very positive attitudes, which are bringing about improvements in their work. For example, they take pride in the work that they produce in their books. They remain interested in their work and are very cooperative. Pupils are polite and care for each other. Their enthusiasm for their education was indicated by some pupils who said that they would like to spend longer at school each day. Pupils behave well in the breakfast club.
- Attendance has improved this year and is above average. There have been no exclusions. Pupils have confidence in the staff and know who to approach if they have problems. They state that no serious bullying takes place and any hint of trouble is quickly sorted out.

- Pupils respect the school environment and the resources they use. They take pride in the school uniform and try to keep themselves smart.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. The school has good links with local external agencies, such as specialised therapists, and the children's centre.
- Pupils understand how to look after themselves in school and how to keep safe beyond it. They know that there are different forms of bullying and what to do should it occur. They are aware of the potential dangers of the internet.
- Pupils know they must not talk to strangers nor go anywhere without their parents' permission. They are familiar with road safety. They indicate that they should wear sunscreen in hot weather and give reasons for this.

The leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders have a focused development plan that has brought improvement in phonics teaching this year. Their plans are based on secure evaluations of where further improvements are needed, particularly in mathematics. Leaders expect good behaviour and have established positive attitudes which provide a strong foundation for further improvements.
- Although regular observations of teaching and learning have brought improvements, feedback given by leaders is insufficiently detailed to ensure the teaching is consistently good. Feedback does not make enough reference to the impact of teaching on the progress that pupils make.
- Reviews of staff performance include all staff, but targets set for teachers are not always sufficiently challenging and sometimes vaguely worded. Consequently, the management of teachers' performance is not sharp enough to make sure all of the teaching is good.
- Subject leaders have clear responsibilities. The plan devised by the new English leaders is well written with suitably challenging improvement targets and actions needed to secure them. Progress towards these targets is being analysed regularly.
- Pupil premium funds have been spent effectively on the pupils for whom it is intended and is enabling them to receive focused support. Action taken has closed the gap with other pupils.
- The primary schools sports grant has also been well spent and enabled pupils to participate in an extended range of sports benefitting their well-being and physical performance. Staff profit from training for teaching gymnastics.
- Good links with local schools enable staff to engage in joint training. Effective links with parents help them to understand how they can help their children at home. They also contribute to good relationships in the immediate community surrounding the school. There is no evidence of discrimination.
- The school manages the constantly changing school population with much thought and direct action. For example, the special arrangements to help pupils settle quickly and learn some basics of the English language help the pupils adjust to their new setting so that they can profit from their lessons.
- The curriculum covers a good range of subjects and an adequate amount of time is spent on

each. There is a good range of after school-activities. Visits to places of interest linked to pupils' studies and visitors, such as theatre groups, add interest to learning.

- Relationships with the Collaborative Academies Trust are good. The Trust has provided the school with much support and training in key areas, for example leadership, governance, teaching and learning.

■ **The governance of the school:**

- The governing body is well led. Its members have a good range of skills which enables them to interpret data accurately and incisively so that they have a clear understanding of how well the school is performing.
- Governors visit, question and challenge the school on results and pupils' progress during the school year.
- They have a good understanding of how the pupil premium money and sports grant have been spent and the impact of these initiatives.
- Governors understand the system to review teachers' performance and other staff and how it links to pay. They challenge the school and undertake particular lines of enquiry to gauge initiatives the school is undertaking to improve rates of progress.
- They make sure safeguarding procedures fully 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	138493
Local authority	Northamptonshire
Inspection number	440047

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	357
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Riley
Headteacher	Duncan McAlpine
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01604 639114
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