

Spurcroft Primary School

Spurcroft Road, Thatcham, RG19 3XX

Inspection dates 17–18 September 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Teaching is not consistently good. Pupils who have previously fallen behind are not always catching up as quickly as they could.
- Not enough pupils are working at the standards expected for their ages in mathematics or writing.
- The quality of teaching is too variable. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, are not always given work at the right level of challenge.
- The most able are not always sufficiently challenged in their learning; as a result, too few achieve the highest levels.
- Pupils lose concentration when activities are too easy or too difficult or fail to maintain their interest.
- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders are not improving the quality of teaching or accelerating rates of progress for pupils fast enough.
- The analysis of information by leaders about how well the school is performing is not sufficiently rigorous.

The school has the following strengths

- Stimulating, well-planned provision in the Early Years Foundation State ensures children get off to a good start to their education.
- Teaching assistants are very effective at supporting pupils with special educational needs, including those with behavioural or emotional difficulties.
- The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength.
- Sports funding is used effectively. Pupils enjoy a rich and varied physical education (PE) curriculum.
- Pupils say they enjoy school and they feel safe in school. Risk assessments are thorough and updated regularly. Attendance is above average.
- Senior leaders and the governing body are committed to improving the school further. They know the school's strengths and have accurately identified areas for further development.

Information about this inspection

- This inspection took place with no notice.
- Inspectors observed 21 lessons, nine of which were observed jointly with senior leaders. Inspectors also observed an assembly, heard pupils reading and discussed their reading progress with them. Meetings were held with two groups of pupils.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior leaders, other staff with significant responsibilities, two representatives of the governing body and a representative from West Berkshire local authority.
- The inspectors took account of 68 responses to Parent View, the online questionnaire for parents, and responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a number of documents, including the school's own information on pupils' current progress, teachers' planning, records showing leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, records relating to behaviour and attendance, and documents relating to keeping pupils safe.

Inspection team

Elizabeth Farr, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Shahnaz Maqsood

Additional Inspector

Wendy Hanrahan

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Spurcroft Primary School is a larger-than-average-sized primary school. Since the previous inspection, the school has expanded. Admission numbers in Reception and Year 1 have increased from 45 to 60 places. The school has a 52-place nursery.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, for which the school receives additional funding (pupil premium), is below average.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported through school action is below average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is also below average.
- The school has had several staff changes since the previous inspection, including the appointment of the current headteacher.
- In 2013 the school received the West Berkshire Early Years Quality Award.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that pupils' progress speeds up by ensuring that:
 - teachers have consistently high expectations so that all pupils learn at a faster rate
 - teachers take steps to help individuals who are falling behind to catch up
 - teachers' planning takes into account where different pupils are up to in their learning, so that work is set with the right level of challenge, including for pupils with special educational needs and the most able learners
 - teachers' marking and feedback identify and help to eradicate basic errors, such as spelling mistakes in writing.
- Improve pupils' learning behaviour by ensuring that work is well matched to their abilities so it maintains their interest.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership by making sure that:
 - the information gained from the monitoring undertaken by leaders is systematically analysed and used to drive improvement at a faster rate
 - the measures used to judge the success of planned actions are sharply linked to rates of pupils' learning and progress.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement because leaders have not improved teaching quickly enough. Although leaders have established a coaching programme to develop teachers' skills and expertise, this has not yet resulted in raising pupils' achievement and raising the overall quality of teaching to at least good.
- Senior leaders undertake regular checks on the quality of teaching. However, their observations of teaching do not focus sharply enough on pupils' learning and progress; therefore, the impact on raising pupils' attainment has been limited.
- The headteacher, senior staff and governors know the school well. Although there are clear systems for monitoring the work of the school, information about pupils' achievement is not evaluated thoroughly.
- The headteacher, ably supported by other senior leaders, has the determination to steer the school in the right direction. There is strong staff morale and the local authority has justifiable confidence in senior leaders to make the necessary improvements.
- Middle leadership has strengthened and leaders are determined to improve the quality of teaching and raise achievement in their subjects. Although plans contain well-judged strategies to improve the quality of teaching, there is a lack of clarity as to how success will be measured.
- Leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and have recently refined systems for the performance management of staff. Teaching staff have regular review meetings which are helping to develop a greater awareness of pupils who are falling behind.
- The school has carefully considered how it uses the extra sports funding so that its impact can be sustained. It has provided staff training in a range of sports, including gymnastics. More pupils participate in a wider range of sports, including table tennis. As a result, school leaders are promoting healthy lifestyles and physical well-being effectively.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted well through the activities that pupils undertake and through the school's promotion of its values, such as 'relationships'. The curriculum is enriched with art, clubs, visits and visitors. Pupils recently enjoyed exhibiting their art work at a local agricultural show.
- Equality of opportunity is promoted well in relation to eliminating any form of discrimination, including the use of racist language. However, it is not as evident in the provision for groups of learners, including those with special educational needs or the most able learners.
- The local authority conducted a review of the school in October 2013. However, it has not monitored closely enough the actions leaders are taking to improve the school. As a result, there has been a limited impact on improving standards.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and provide good support and challenge to the school. Governors have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and have developed useful induction guidance to support new governors. Governors have made good use of training opportunities to develop their understanding of school performance data. As a result, they are now beginning to question the school more robustly about the progress pupils are making. However, governors are less clear about how well pupils are achieving compared to national standards. They know how effective teaching and learning are because the headteacher keeps them informed. The governors make regular visits to subject leaders and classes in order to check for themselves. They make sure that all safeguarding policies and procedures are in place so that pupils and staff are kept safe. They monitor school finances, which they carefully check, including the pupil premium funding and sports funding. They are involved in setting targets for the management of the headteacher's performance and have also been involved in the review of the process that is in place for staff.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

requires improvement

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. Typically, most pupils behave well, listen to their teachers and complete tasks. However, when tasks are too easy or too hard, pupils become restless and inattentive. This is because adults do not always methodically oversee the progress pupils are making. On these occasions, pupils chat with their friends rather than concentrating on their learning.
- Some lessons promote the school's learning values of resilience, reasoning, reflection and responsibility effectively. For example, in a Years 5 and 6 spelling lesson, pupils enjoyed discussing spelling rules and

were able to reflect on their learning and reason well with each other.

- The school's work to keep the pupils safe and secure is good. The school provides a safe environment for its pupils. Records show that risk assessments are robust and up to date. Parents expressed confidence in the school's ability to keep their child safe.
- Policies and procedures for safeguarding are fully in place. School leaders work well with external agencies; they are unyielding in their approach to securing necessary additional help, working closely with families.
- A small proportion of parents and pupils expressed concerns regarding the behaviour of a small number of pupils. Behaviour logs provide a clear record of these incidents and show how they have been appropriately followed up. However, leaders do not use the information in these logs to determine whether the number of incidents is increasing or reducing as a result of the actions taken.
- During the inspection, behaviour at lunchtime and on the playground was generally good. Pupils move around the school calmly. Routines, such as lining up at playtime or for an assembly, are well established.
- Pupils generally play well together and speak positively about the range of activities available, particularly at lunchtimes. Pupils are polite and well-mannered towards adults
- Pupils know what bullying is and mentioned some bullying that had taken place. A very small minority of parents also expressed concern. Inspectors found that school leaders record all incidents carefully and deal effectively with these isolated incidents. School leaders are also committed to hosting an annual anti-bullying week to raise awareness.
- Systems for monitoring attendance are rigorous. Staff are especially vigilant about following up absence and, as a result, attendance has improved steadily and is above the national average.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because not enough has been good or better over time. Expectations are still not high enough in some classes. As a result, progress is not consistently good as pupils move through the school.
- In some lessons the work given to pupils is not stimulating enough or well matched to their needs. When this happens pupils' attention drifts and this impedes their progress.
- The work set for more-able pupils is sometimes too easy. Tasks lack challenge and there are not enough opportunities for pupils to apply their knowledge and deepen their understanding.
- Where teaching is most effective, teachers have high expectations, check pupils' understanding and address misconceptions. In a phonics session in Year 1, the teacher, using skilful questioning, regularly checked pupils understanding. As a result, pupils applied their phonic skills well to sentence writing and achieved well.
- Where learning is most effective, teachers plan and set work which builds on what pupils of different ability already know, understand and can do. Teachers' explanations are clear and, with skilful questioning, teachers make regular checks on pupils' understanding. This means that misconceptions are quickly identified and resolved.
- Teachers' use of assessment is developing. In the best examples, marking is very useful and helps pupils understand what aspects of their work they need to improve and how. Where assessment is less effective, basic errors, such as spelling mistakes, are not routinely corrected.
- Well-trained teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of small groups and individuals, particularly pupils with special educational needs. They work effectively to implement specialist teaching programmes designed to support these pupils, particularly those with emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- Checks made by the local authority confirm that teachers' assessment judgements are reliable. This is because of recent training for teachers to help them assess pupils' attainment more accurately. They have also worked with teachers from other schools to check that judgements are accurate and consistent.
- Homework is used well, for example to reinforce reading and support topic work.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Achievement requires improvement because progress across the school is inconsistent. Progress is inconsistent across all year groups, except in Year 6 when progress accelerates. This is because teaching is not good enough in all classes to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress.

- In 2014, Year 6 pupils attained broadly average standards in their final year. Highly effective teaching and well-chosen additional resources ensured that gaps in these pupils' learning were addressed.
- Pupils make slower progress in writing than in reading. They develop writing skills less quickly because they do not have enough opportunities to rehearse and use them freely in independent work in ways that are stimulating or challenging.
- Not enough pupils achieve the higher levels. Teachers do not plan sufficient opportunities for the most able pupils to think hard or apply their existing knowledge more widely.
- The progress of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs varies because teaching is inconsistent in its support for these pupils. Not all make good progress. Expectations of what these pupils can achieve are not always high enough.
- Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. Children's attainment is above national figures. Children achieve better in number than in writing.
- Pupils' performance in the Year 1 phonics (letters and sounds) screening check is improving. Regular small group teaching in Reception and Key Stage 1 is helping to address this.
- Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals in Year 6 in 2014 were three terms behind in reading, writing and mathematics. Despite this, additional support has had a positive impact on accelerating their progress and many made better progress than their classmates, especially in writing.

The early years provision

is good

- Standards at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving and are now above average. Although attainment in writing and number has improved, writing remains weaker.
- Good quality teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage provides a range of activities across all seven areas of learning. This helps to develop children's curiosity and desire to learn. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are well prepared for Key Stage 1.
- Children make expected progress from their starting points, with some pupils making accelerated progress, particularly those who speak English as an additional language.
- Stimulating activities, both indoors and outdoors, promote high levels of engagement, cooperation and interest from children in the Early Years Foundation Stage. This ensures they learn well through exploration and play.
- Adults skilfully intervene to question and prompt children's thinking, effectively encouraging resilience and independence.
- Children's behaviour is good. Children rapidly gain confidence and self-assurance. They are motivated by the broad range of activities and listen carefully to each other.
- Partnership with parents is good. Parents are fully involved, making valuable contributions to reviews of children's progress and experiences.
- Safeguarding and child protection policies are implemented consistently and all training, including paediatric first aid, is up to date.
- Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good. Leaders have accurately identified areas that are weaker. Plans to promote more opportunities for children to write, particularly in independent activities, are well-judged.

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	109937
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	449148

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community School
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	421
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Nina Hopkinson
Headteacher	Mr Nathan Butler-Broad
Date of previous school inspection	20–21 January 2011
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