

Spurcroft Primary School

Spurcroft Road, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3XX

Inspection dates

29–30 September 2016

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Senior leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection. As a result, all groups of pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects from their starting points.
- Middle leaders have led improvements effectively in the teaching of English and mathematics so that outcomes for pupils are now good.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have high expectations of pupils, know them well and plan activities that enliven their learning.
- Disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities progress at rates similar to other pupils.
- Pupils behave well and show care and consideration towards others. They say they feel safe in school and that the school keeps them safe.
- The challenge for pupils is not consistent and results in some slow progress, especially for the most able pupils.
- Feedback to pupils does not always follow the school's marking policy and clearly inform pupils how they can improve their work.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and their appreciation of British values are promoted well and this ensures that the school is a vibrant and caring community.
- Pupils benefit from an engaging curriculum, with many opportunities to visit places of interest. The curriculum is very well planned to provide stimulating experiences for pupils.
- The provision in the early years is good. Children make good progress because teaching is effective and tasks challenge children appropriately. They are well prepared for when they start in Year 1.
- Pupils throughout the school say they feel safe. Risk assessments are carefully maintained and appropriate, and arrangements for checking the suitability of staff are thorough.
- The governing body checks the school's performance effectively and rigorously. Governors have high expectations of all the pupils in the school.
- Pupils' investigative and problem-solving skills are not strong. They do not use and apply their knowledge and skills in a wide enough range of contexts.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure better outcomes for all pupils by:
 - providing appropriate challenge, particularly for the most able, so that the pace of learning in lessons is sustained
 - ensuring that pupils fully understand and use the guidance they are given by teachers to improve their work
 - making sure that pupils improve their investigative and problem-solving skills in mathematics through the use and application of their knowledge and understanding.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Leaders, including governors, set high expectations for pupils and staff. They have ensured that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning have improved significantly since the previous inspection. Leaders have successfully improved the skills of staff through a rigorous programme of professional development.
- Middle leaders are now more effective and their roles more clear. They are closely involved in checking the amount of progress that pupils make by observing teaching, checking pupils' work, analysing pupils' performance and leading training. This has greatly enhanced leadership capacity. They identify best practice in their areas of responsibility and share this work widely across the school. However, more work is needed in mathematics because pupils do not use their skills widely enough in investigations or problem-solving tasks.
- Pupils benefit from an exciting and well-planned curriculum. Teachers ensure that pupils' time in school is memorable, providing many exciting experiences. The activities in the before- and after-school club also provoke much interest, enjoyment and excitement. Pupils enjoy exploring local history, often visiting places of interest, including museums. However, the curriculum for the most able pupils does not demand enough of pupils because tasks do not challenge their thinking or make them use the full range of their skills.
- The management of teachers' performance is linked very closely to specific pupils, to the teachers' standards and to any pay awards. Leaders' checks on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are now more frequent, and they ensure that teachers receive the appropriate support and training to improve. As a result, teaching is good and improving and pupils make good progress.
- Pupils are prepared well for life in modern Britain because they systematically learn about British values through specific topics and celebrating special days. In personal, social, health and economic education, pupils learn to consider the needs of vulnerable groups in society. They demonstrate a mature ability to show respect towards other people, regardless of any differences. Pupils gain an understanding of other religions and visit different places of worship to widen their appreciation of and respect for cultural and religious diversity.
- The pupil premium is used well to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and those disadvantaged pupils who are most able. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is tracked and monitored carefully. These pupils are provided with timely and effective support, including one-to-one support in specific subjects, to ensure that they achieve well. Leaders ensure that disadvantaged pupils are helped and encouraged to participate fully in all that the school has to offer.
- The physical education (PE) and sport premium grant for primary schools is used effectively. Specialist sports coaches are employed to help train staff in the delivery of PE and sport, and this is helping to improve their teaching. The funding also gives pupils opportunities to take part in a wider range of activities throughout the year.
- The monitoring of some of the aspects of the school's work is not yet fully developed. For example, there is limited monitoring of the impact of the PE premium. As a result the school does not maximise the potential of its efforts.

- The school has a good relationship with the local authority and has benefited from well-targeted challenge and support. This has been particularly useful in helping to improve the quality of teaching, and sharpening the accuracy of leaders' assessment of progress against key priorities.

Governance of the school

- The governing body is knowledgeable and holds school leaders to account for the impact of their work to improve the school. Minutes from governors' meetings demonstrate their ability to ask searching and challenging questions of senior leaders. They also ensure that senior leaders are supported effectively.
- The governing body draws on a good range of relevant expertise among its members in order to carry out its duties effectively. They have a clear understanding of the quality of teaching and its impact on outcomes for pupils, including pupils from different groups.
- Governors manage the finance and resources that are available to the school effectively and know of the impact of spending on pupil achievement. Governors are fully aware that additional funding, including the pupil premium, is making a difference to the achievement and lives of the pupils that are supported. They know that disadvantaged pupils do as well as other pupils nationally and are aiming for their attainment to rise further.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders ensure that staff access training regularly to help them fulfil their responsibilities. As a result, staff know precisely what to do if they have any concerns relating to a pupil's safety or welfare. The school has effective partnership arrangements with a wide range of health, social and legal services that help to keep pupils safe and well.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Effective assessment arrangements are in place for reading, writing and mathematics. These clearly show what pupils can do and enable teachers and senior leaders to accurately measure pupils' progress through the school and take effective action if it slows.
- Teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the progress pupils make. They work effectively with pupils, including those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantaged pupils. Leaders and teachers monitor the progress of these pupils frequently to ensure that they make good progress and that interventions are successfully improving any weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of marking of pupils' work has improved since the previous inspection, in line with the school's policy on marking. Pupils are given guidance on how to improve their work. However, pupils are not consistent in using this guidance, and this hinders their understanding and progress when next undertaking a similar piece of work.
- Good-quality phonics teaching provides pupils with strategies to read and sound out unfamiliar words. Pupils, particularly those who found reading difficult, read to inspectors and skilfully sounded out and blended new words and read them accurately. For example, a pupil accurately used phonics to successfully read the word 'snuggled'.

- Evidence in pupils' books shows that the teaching of writing is good. Pupils are taught different styles of writing and learn how to write for different audiences. For example, there are good opportunities to write short pieces and to write at length as well as to apply their grammatical knowledge to ensure that their writing has a powerful impact.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning, and there are strong working relationships between them and staff. As a result, lessons start swiftly and there are very few interruptions to learning. Pupils are keen to do their best and say that they enjoy their learning.
- Staff use questioning and explanation effectively to motivate nearly all pupils. The pace of teaching and learning is often rapid and is enjoyed by all pupils. They rise to the challenge, for example when using their knowledge of times tables to explore multiples in depth during mathematics lessons.
- Pupils are not consistently provided with good opportunities to fully master mathematical skills, including applying them to solve mathematical problems or to conduct investigations. This slows the progress they make.
- The most able pupils, including the disadvantaged pupils in this group, said that they enjoyed being challenged because it made them work and think hard. Teachers use a good range of practical equipment to help pupils complete their work but too often they undertake tasks that do not make them think in detail and use their skills precisely.
- The learning of some pupils is not fast enough or is too variable due to insufficient challenge, especially for the most able pupils. As a result, the pace of learning slows and pupils, including the most able, lose concentration. This variability over time has resulted in pupils' rates of progress not accelerating quickly enough.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. Pupils are kind, friendly and courteous. They are respectful of all staff and each other and engage easily with visitors to talk about their learning. Pupils are confident learners who know how to achieve well. This is strengthened by the strong relationships that exist in the school.
- Pupils interact especially well when learning together. The most able pupils sensitively support other pupils in lessons. Pupils are extremely polite and treat visitors with great respect and consideration. However, there are occasions when some pupils find it difficult to engage positively with one another in lessons.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at all times and have a good understanding of how they can stay safe while using the internet. They know that they should always talk to an adult if they are not sure about the safety of a website.
- Pupils' understanding of British values is good. For example, pupils talk with maturity about how we should respect everyone, and show recognition of the need for inclusion, honesty and compassion. Consequently, pupils and their parents have raised significant funds for many charities and have a good understanding of the importance of physical and emotional well-being.

- Pupils have a good awareness of different types of bullying, including racist and homophobic bullying and cyber bullying. Pupils say that bullying is rare. This is confirmed by the school's behaviour records which show very few incidents. Displays around school show that pupils engage well in looking at anti-bullying approaches.
- Pupils are taught about healthy lifestyles, including healthy eating. The various sporting activities, including clubs, contribute effectively to the physical health and well-being of pupils. Pupils enjoy attending the breakfast club and the after-school club, which provide a safe and healthy start and end to the day.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They strive to succeed, are engaged and motivated to learn and value the contributions of their classmates. They show a good understanding of the values of perseverance and resilience and explain why these are so important in their learning. One pupil summed up the approach of many pupils in telling an inspector 'we are inspired never to quit'.
- Pupils from all backgrounds get on well with each other and play happily at breaktimes. They move around the school building sensibly and work together purposefully in lessons. They are keen to learn and disruption to learning is rare. Pupils who attend the before- and after-school club also play well together.
- Pupils are of the view that behaviour is almost always good. They say that sometimes people fall out, but soon become friends again, and that minor disputes are quickly 'sorted out'. One or two pupils very occasionally drift off task but this is because they require additional support when a task is too easy.
- Attendance is average. The school works robustly to encourage pupils to come to school as often as possible. They provide support and communicate with parents to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities and the importance of regular attendance. There are effective strategies to challenge when attendance is not frequent enough.
- Pupils cooperate fully with staff, for example when teachers and support staff manage pupils' movement back into lessons at the end of breaktimes. Lessons get underway swiftly without any delay or disruption. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour around school, particularly in lessons, which are invariably calm. There are times when pupils do not fully engage with teachers when learning, especially when it does not interest them.
- Staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and apply the behaviour policy consistently. Pupils know the consequences of poor behaviour, and they know about the 'warning' system and that good behaviour will be celebrated and valued. Pupils are enthusiastic about receiving rewards for good behaviour and this motivates them well.
- Most parents who responded to the survey thought that the school does a good job in making sure pupils are well behaved.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Decisive action by school leaders during the last 18 months has significantly improved pupils' achievement since the last inspection and since the publication of the 2015 achievement results. From different starting points, pupils make good, and in some cases very good, progress.

- Achievement has been steadily improving but information in published tests up to 2015 indicated that pupils' progress was still below that seen nationally. Inspection evidence, including work seen in pupils' books, observation of work in lessons and the school's records of pupils' attainment, shows that all groups of pupils now make good progress across the year groups in a wide range of subjects. This is indicated by early results from the 2016 tests, which show good progress in key subjects. Progress is also good in other subjects, most notably science, history and art.
- Inspection evidence shows that attainment is rising quickly, including for pupils who need to catch up, because teaching is effective and teachers usually plan well for different groups of pupils. Attainment at the end of key stage 1 in 2015 was significantly below average in writing, and significantly above average in mathematics. Attainment at the end of key stage 2 was significantly below the national average in mathematics and writing. Initial results from 2016 show that attainment is improving and is in line with the national picture.
- The strengthened tracking of pupils' progress has resulted in a sharper focus on disadvantaged pupils. Leaders successfully identify underperforming groups and individuals so that appropriate support can be provided. Additional intervention groups and specific programmes have improved writing, phonics and reading skills for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- The school is quick to identify any pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Staff then make effective provision for them, either within the class, in small groups or individually. This includes those pupils who have special educational needs or disabilities. These pupils make good progress from their starting points because teachers give them activities that are well matched to their needs.
- The most able pupils show an increased ability to write independently for a range of purposes and across different subjects. They have strong calculation skills and abilities, as shown when they solve increasingly complex problems. Sometimes, they are not challenged sufficiently and this means that their progress is not as strong as it could be.
- Disadvantaged pupils typically make at least expected progress. Some make more than the expected progress, in reading, writing and mathematics. This rate of progress is replicated throughout the school and for the most able pupils who are disadvantaged. Well-targeted support helps to ensure that there are no significant differences between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils nationally. In some year groups, they perform better than their peers.
- Current performance information and work in pupils' books confirm that there is no significant difference in the progress that boys and girls make.
- Pupils' skills in mathematical problem solving are not as well developed as other aspects of pupils' knowledge and understanding, for example calculation. Teachers do not present sufficiently different contexts for pupils to test out their skills.

Early years provision

Good

- Children join Reception with skills slightly below what is typical for their age. Good-quality teaching ensures that they, and children in the Nursery Year group, make good progress in the early years. By the end of the Reception Year, the percentage of children who achieve a good level of development is in line with the national average.

- Staff typically plan the children's work well, taking into account their different ages and stages of learning. They monitor and record the progress that children make with their learning. This information is used well to plan for their next steps in learning. However, writing tasks do not consistently challenge children and this slows their progress.
- Children quickly learn the essential social and emotional skills. They are able to share, take turns, concentrate and apply themselves to tasks. In the Reception class they show good levels of maturity and can concentrate for relatively long periods of time. This underpins their strong progress in all areas of learning.
- The most able children are challenged well so that they are exceeding the skills typically found for their age. Disadvantaged children in the early years also achieve well and make good gains in their early language and communication skills. When needed, the school makes effective links with other agencies to provide early support to children with special educational needs or disabilities.
- Children from the Nursery and Reception make good use of a stimulating outdoor area. Boys and girls make imaginative use of equipment to explore their surroundings. This helps them to solve problems and use language to explain what they are doing and why, for example when pupils make shapes in sand.
- Phonics is well taught and children look forward to practising their letter sounds. Children enthusiastically and accurately suggested words when they were asked for a word with different sounds. They use their phonics skills to write words and simple sentences.
- Children across the setting enjoy sharing; they listen to each other and adults carefully and like to talk about their learning. Children's work is exhibited and given pride of place in displays around the school and they are praised for their hard work.
- Children behave well and show care for each other. They are safe because staff supervise them well and know when to provide close support or observe from a distance. Safeguarding arrangements in the early years are effective and meet requirements. Effective safeguarding arrangements are fully implemented in the early years.
- Leadership and management of the early years are good. The curriculum and teaching are closely monitored and continuously improving. This is ensuring that rates of progress are increasing. Leaders ensure that there is regular communication with parents and that on entry to the Nursery and Reception classes a clear picture of each child has been gained to ensure a smooth start to their school life.

School details

Unique reference number	109937
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10019862

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	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	469
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Nina Hopkinson
Headteacher	Nathan Butler-Broad
Telephone number	01635 871 541
Website	www.spurcroft.w-berks.sch.uk
Email address	headteacher@spurcroft.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 September 2014

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is larger than the average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- The proportion of pupils who are disadvantaged and supported through pupil premium funding is below average. (The pupil premium is additional government funding to support those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after by the local authority.)
- Children in the early years provision attend the Nursery and Reception classes. The Nursery children attend on a part-time basis and Reception children attend on a full-time basis in three mixed-aged classes.
- The school meets current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- There is a before- and after-school club managed by the governing body.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 18 lessons, of which eight were joint observations with the headteacher and deputy headteachers. The inspectors also listened to pupils read and looked at pupils' work in their books and on display.
- Meetings and discussions were held with the headteacher and deputy headteachers, middle leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.
- The inspectors met with a group of pupils, observed playtime, and talked with pupils and staff around the school.
- The inspectors examined a range of school documents, including information on pupils' progress across the school, development plans, minutes of governing body meetings and checks on the quality of teaching. They also examined the school records relating to behaviour, safety and attendance.
- The inspectors took account of 59 responses received from parents to Ofsted's online questionnaire 'Parent View'. In addition, inspectors spoke with parents in the playground at the end of the school day.

Inspection team

Richard Blackmore, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Peter Dunmall	Ofsted Inspector
Steph Fawdry	Ofsted Inspector

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