

Wellsprings Primary School

Crowcombe Road, Taunton, Somerset TA2 7NF

Inspection dates

15–16 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Leaders' analysis of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment has been overgenerous. This has masked underachievement.
- Senior leaders' plans for improving the school have not been precise enough to bring about the necessary improvements quickly.
- The school's analysis of the impact of the pupil premium funding is not sharp enough. This hinders leaders' and governors' ability to check which strategies are working best and which need refining.
- Although results are improving, historically too few pupils reach a high standard; in particular, middle-ability pupils in mathematics.
- Teachers' expectations for pupils' writing in subjects other than English are not consistently high, and in many year groups they are too low.
- Despite better-matched teaching in recent months, pupils' progress still varies across subjects and year groups. This reflects inconsistencies in the quality of teaching.
- Teaching does not build consistently on what pupils already know and can do. This applies in particular to those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities and slows the progress pupils make.
- Too few boys make good progress in reading.
- While pupils behave well in lessons, some pupils' behaviour at less structured times of the day, such as in breakfast club or at lunchtimes, is over-boisterous.
- Governors do not receive the information they need to hold leaders to account for pupils' outcomes with sufficient rigour.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make good progress in the early years foundation stage to be ready for learning in key stage 1.
- School staff promote a caring ethos and culture. As a result, pupils feel well supported and valued. They trust staff to keep them safe and to sort out disagreements swiftly and fairly.
- Leaders have taken effective action in some areas previously identified for improvement. For example, teachers' work to improve pupils' phonic knowledge has been effective.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are leading to improved rates of progress.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Strengthen pupils' progress and achievement in reading, writing and mathematics to meet at least the national average by ensuring that teachers:
 - extend middle-ability pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills by offering greater challenge in reasoning and problem-solving skills
 - set work that is well matched to pupils' needs, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities so that they can practise and apply the skills they learn in interventions when they are in whole-class activities
 - motivate and engage boys in reading
 - have sufficiently high expectations so that pupils apply their writing skills across other subjects.
- Ensure that the good behaviour pupils display in lessons is reflected in their play and in less structured parts of the school day.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of leaders are sufficiently clear so that everyone understands their part in the school improvement process and takes responsibility for pupils' outcomes
 - making sure that the school improvement plan focuses on a realistic number of the most essential priorities that staff need to work on to move the school to good, setting clear timescales with measurable goals for pupils' outcomes
 - ensuring that leaders focus in depth on how successfully pupils are learning when judging the quality of teaching, and that specific pupil groups, such as disadvantaged pupils, are included fully in this process
 - strengthening the capacity of governors to provide the right degree of challenge to assure themselves that pupils from different groups and in different year groups are achieving as well as they should and that any additional funding is helping to overcome underperformance quickly.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The school has had an erratic journey since the last inspection. Leaders have managed change with variable success. Pupil numbers on roll have risen considerably. In addition, difficulties in managing changes to assessment procedures in the national curriculum 2014 have destabilised the school's progress. Leaders' actions since September have led to improvements. The school is back on track. However, a legacy of underachievement over at least a year for some pupils, although diminishing, remains.
- The dip in the 2016 end of key stage 2 test results came as a shock to leaders. Checks on pupils' achievements had not been linked closely enough to the raised expectations of the curriculum requirements. Since then, leaders have acted with greater precision. Accordingly, rates of progress are accelerating, but not for all pupil groups or across all subjects.
- The school's current plan for improvement lists many actions. It is difficult to pinpoint where the priorities lie. Timescales are unclear. Milestones are not in place, or where there are, they are not sufficiently focused. Consequently, it is difficult for those monitoring the success of the plan, including governors, to check that actions are leading to sustained and substantial improvement.
- Not all leaders and teachers have a firm understanding of the school's assessment reporting system. Where this occurs, misunderstandings cloud leaders' perceptions. This is pertinent to the new assessment arrangements only. Prior to 2016, school improvement was on an upward trajectory.
- Leaders judge teaching to be consistently good and some outstanding. When making judgements, leaders do not take enough account of the impact of strategies on pupils' progress. Leaders' over-optimistic judgements undermine the urgency with which action needs to be taken to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Leaders' in-depth analysis of the 2016 test results has resulted in effective changes in the organisation and content of lessons and assessment procedures. The introduction of regular testing across the school enables leaders to check the accuracy of teachers' assessments more closely, for example with spelling and reading ages. Inspectors found a small proportion of teachers' assessments to be overly positive. Leaders had not identified this.
- Outcomes for disadvantaged pupils have been variable. The additional funding for disadvantaged pupils has started to have a positive effect. However, there is still more to do in prioritising funding so that widespread shortcomings in pupils' progress are overcome, particularly for readers and writers who are disadvantaged, or of low ability. However, leaders have had recent success in supporting more of the most able disadvantaged mathematicians to make good progress.
- The special educational needs leader ensures that adequate plans and actions are in place for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Additional funding is deployed effectively. However, the effectiveness of pupils' support is variable across year groups because the use of assessment information is inconsistent.

- The curriculum is organised and arranged to ensure that a breadth of subjects beyond English and mathematics is taught. However, it is not providing pupils with enough opportunities to develop their writing skills in other subjects. Set learning tasks limit pupils' expectations in subjects such as history and geography.
- The school's curriculum promotes pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development well. Pupils are mindful of the school's values and the atmosphere that leaders and staff want to create in the school to help them learn successfully. This has had a positive impact on the rate of pupils' progress and their attitudes towards learning. However, leaders recognise there is more to be done to ensure that pupils behave equally well at all times, including less structured parts of the school day, such as playtime.
- Well-organised and enthusiastic leadership of the physical education and sport premium has had a positive impact on pupils' activity rates. Over two-thirds of the pupils now take part in additional sporting activities. The creation of a sports council and play leaders has further raised the profile of activity, mental well-being and fitness at play and lunchtimes.
- Senior leaders have secured the confidence of staff. There is a tangible sense of teamwork in the school. Staff feel respected and trusted and are proud to be a member of staff at Wellsprings. As a result, staff are keen to work together and share leaders' determination to improve outcomes for all pupils. Staff are positive about the changes implemented and display a passion to 'get it right' for the pupils. The majority of parents recognise this dedication. Typically, parents commented that 'teachers and support staff go the extra mile'.
- Wellsprings is an inclusive school. It has had success in supporting pupils who have not had a positive experience in other schools.
- Leaders have been effective in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection in 2012. Areas of previous weakness are now strengths of the school.
- The external support from the local authority has been effective. It has identified issues raised through published national data and brokered help from a local school. This support started in October. Leaders have valued this partnership but it is too soon to determine the impact of this collaboration.

Governance of the school

- Representatives of the governing body visit the school and are active in checking the progress of school improvement measures. However, priorities are broad. This lack of precision limits the effectiveness with which governors can challenge. This year, changes in the composition of the governing body have increased its capacity to provide appropriate challenge for the school's leaders.
- The headteacher presents information honestly and comprehensively. However, he has not made sufficient checks to ensure that the information is robust. Similarly, as whole-school averages were provided, the weaker progress in some year groups was not clear. Governors did not question the validity of the assessments sufficiently. Nor did they seek external verification.

- Governors direct the pupil premium funding appropriately to promote inclusion. However, until recently, governors lacked a clear strategy for checking and improving academic outcomes for disadvantaged pupils. Consequently, outcomes for these pupils are too variable both over time and for current pupils in the school.
- The governing body have ensured that the school is generously staffed with teachers and teaching assistants. Consequently, pupils receive a lot of adult support. This is particularly effective in helping pupils learn when they are working in small, focused groups, for example in key stage 1 phonics lessons.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Leaders have set up rigorous systems to ensure that any pupils who are experiencing, or likely to face, risks to their safety or well-being are protected. Leaders who have responsibility for this work have good links with a range of external agencies and are unwavering in accessing support for families.
- Where pupils attend alternative provision, leaders are vigilant in working closely with providers to ensure that pupils' well-being is catered for.
- Pupils say that they feel safe and know who to go to if they have concerns. Leaders have been effective in keeping safeguarding on everyone's radar. The culture of sharing concerns is embedded in the school culture. Staff know the children well. Leaders provide regular training and updates so that staff are alert to signs and symptoms that may suggest pupils are at risk. Records of concerns are well maintained and reflect leaders' prompt action in involving other agencies when appropriate.
- Pupils feel safe and know what steps they should take in certain situations to stay safe, including when online.
- School leaders and governors ensure that pupils are kept safe through effective systems for recruiting, appointing and training staff. However, records, although containing the required information, are not well organised.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Inaccurate assessment in the past has led to gaps in pupils' knowledge. Consequently, outcomes in 2016 for Years 2 and 6 were below the national average. Not enough account was taken of the new national assessment arrangements. This has led to gaps in pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. Inconsistencies still exist across the year groups and across subjects. Consequently, teaching is not yet good.
- Teachers' planning is now more closely linked to current national expectations. Consequently, pupils' progress is speeding up. However, this has not been the case for long enough to get pupils back on track to their age-related expectations.
- Skilled teaching assistants help pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to learn effective strategies to overcome their difficulties. Some teachers make interventions which well suit the work that pupils do in class. When this happens, progress is accelerated. However, other teachers do not make interventions which build on the skills, knowledge and understanding that pupils have acquired.

Consequently, progress falters.

- Previously, there was an inconsistent approach to the teaching of phonics and English grammar, punctuation and spelling across classes. Teachers are now following a new and consistent approach. This having a good effect in Years 1 and 2, where pupils' spelling and reading ages have risen dramatically due to better-focused teaching. Better teaching has also resulted in pupils making accelerated progress in their writing, particularly for pupils in Years 5 and 6. However, there is still some way to travel for some pupils to reach age-related expectations.
- The teaching of mathematics is closing gaps in pupils' knowledge of number facts and calculations. More recently, the increased focus on developing pupils' reasoning skills has supported significant improvement. In particular, the most able pupils are now receiving the challenge they need and are making speedier progress as a result.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare requires improvement.
- Pupils learn about respect, integrity and how different faiths and religions are observed. Consequently, they can articulate modern British values. However, at times when they have the greatest independence, such as playtimes, they do not uphold these principles. Pupils' behaviour at lunchtimes is not as good as it is in lessons.
- The school's breakfast club does not provide a calm and healthy start to the day. Although adults are trained effectively and keep pupils safe, leaders have not adhered to guidance on staff and pupil ratios.
- Pupils can explain how they are educated about how to be safe, including when using technology. However, the practice of giving sweets as class rewards does not support pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is and are of the opinion that staff take effective action to prevent it. Pupils say that they sometimes 'squabble' but that bullying is rare. The majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, agreed that the school deals well with bullying. However, a small number of parents do not share this view.
- The majority of pupils take pride in being part of their school. Those with responsibilities, such as play leaders and school council members, take their roles seriously and are proud of the difference they make.
- Work in books demonstrates that most pupils take a pride in their learning. Accelerated progress this year also reflects pupils' eagerness to learn. Pupils behave well in lessons. Most listen attentively to the adults. Pupils are generally polite and respectful to others and cooperate well in lessons.
- Pupils who have social and emotional development needs are well catered for. Leaders engage with other agencies and provide bespoke support so that these pupils have the necessary building blocks to gain in confidence and ability.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement.
- At less structured times of the day such as transitions between lessons, at breakfast club and play and lunchtimes, there is a marked difference and a decline in some pupils' behaviour. Although adults deal with this effectively, the sometimes over-boisterous behaviour is in direct contrast to behaviour seen in lessons.
- Some of the older pupils' behaviour in breakfast club is not conducive to a calm and happy start to the day. Pupils told the inspector that adults 'sort naughty behaviour quickly' and that 'pupils have time out and then they behave'.
- Staff consistently apply the school's behaviour policy in lessons. Pupils clearly understand and follow the policy in their lessons. Pupils say that behaviour around the school has improved since the introduction of the WASP ('Walking Around School Properly') Charter.
- Pupils' attendance remains above the national average. The number of pupils who are persistently absent has reduced. The approach taken by leaders to reduce the number of pupils who are excluded from school is effective. However, the number of fixed-term exclusions remains high and is above the national average.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Current pupils' attainment and progress are too variable. The breakthrough with more accurate assessment is now leading to accelerated progress for some groups, especially in Years 5 and 6. However, the impact of leaders and teachers' previous low expectations means that significant catch-up is required for these pupils to meet national expectations.
- Standards declined in 2016. Too few pupils in key stages 1 and 2, including disadvantaged pupils, met the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In the three years prior to 2016, outcomes at the end of key stage 2 were at least in line with, and sometimes better than, national averages. This represented good progress for middle- and higher-ability pupils. However, the progress of lower-ability, disadvantaged writers was not good. Although improving, the progress of lower-ability writers, including the disadvantaged pupils among this group, is not good enough for them to catch up quickly enough.
- Pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics varies across year groups. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard in science was above the national average in key stage 2 and below average in key stage 1. Adults do not consistently expect high standards in subjects such as history, geography and science.
- At key stage 1, there had been an improving picture, which culminated in 2015, with more pupils achieving the higher levels in writing and mathematics than those nationally. In 2016, end of key stage 1 outcomes show that the most able pupils continue to achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics. However, fewer of the middle prior attaining pupils than nationally go on to achieve a high standard in

mathematics.

- Historically, by the end of key stage 2, the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in mathematics. The progress of disadvantaged pupils from their different starting points in reading and writing is variable across the school. Progress of disadvantaged pupils is best in the early years and in Year 6.
- Too few boys make good progress in reading, in particular lower-ability boys who are also disadvantaged. There are encouraging signs of improvement with boys in all but two year groups. Boys are now making accelerated progress. The new approach to teaching phonics is supporting these boys in developing skills. Their reading ages and spelling ages are improving. However, this approach has not had enough time to make a discernible difference to their confidence and enjoyment of reading.
- Attainment in phonics has been in line with the national average over the last few years. This represents good progress from pupils' starting points. However, the difference for disadvantaged pupils has not diminished quickly enough.
- The improvement in phonics is having a positive effect on pupils' writing. There is clear improvement on the low standards achieved at the end of key stages 1 and 2 last year.
- Workbooks of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not reflect the same quality of writing as they achieve when they are receiving support in small groups. Because of this, progress for these pupils is variable in key stages 1 and 2.
- In mathematics, there are positive signs that more pupils are on track to achieve in line with expectations. Although pupils achieved well at key stage 1, their progress slowed throughout early key stage 2. Progress in mathematics is gathering pace at a faster rate than in other subjects. Pupils are increasingly able to apply their number facts to solve problems. Workbooks show that disadvantaged pupils are generally making accelerated progress in mathematics from their different starting points.
- Outcomes in the early years are good. Children make good progress across all areas of learning.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years was identified as an area for improvement at the time of the previous inspection. It is now a strength of the school.
- There has been a three-year improving trend in the proportion of children achieving a good level of development. In 2016, outcomes were in line with the national average. This is a testament to the effectiveness of the early years leader in improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Most children join the school in the Nursery Year, on a part-time basis. Children's work in books shows that they make good progress across all areas of learning. Teachers' increased expectations have led to most children now making good progress so that

they start Year 1 as confident learners with the skills and knowledge expected for their age.

- Effective arrangements for starting school ensure that children make a positive start to school life. Routines are established quickly in this well-organised foundation stage unit. This supports children's confidence and their capacity to learn.
- Most parents are appreciative of the care taken to ensure that their children are happy and make good progress. They appreciate the key worker system and are increasingly involved in contributing to their child's assessments through an online system.
- Children learn their letters and sounds quickly. They practise their skills independently and boys and girls are equally keen to record their ideas. Standards in writing are strong. Workbooks demonstrate that children who could not write their name in September are now writing several sentences independently using full stops and capital letters accurately.
- Adults provide good-quality care and support for children who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These children make good progress from their starting points. Similarly, disadvantaged children make good progress. For example, teachers' strong focus on developing children's literacy skills resulted in reading outcomes in 2016 being above the national average for disadvantaged children.
- Teaching is typically good. Teaching and learning opportunities are well planned and provide children with ample opportunities to practise learning independently. Teachers provide a highly stimulating environment for children to explore. Consequently, they are curious and enthusiastic learners.
- School leaders check that all possible steps are taken to ensure that children are safeguarded. There are a large number of adults who supervise the children closely. As a result, children understand the safety and hygiene rules. Good relationships ensure that children thrive.
- The school is currently refining the way it assesses what children can and cannot do. This has caused some confusion between leaders and resulted in leaders unintentionally providing governors with information that is unclear.

School details

Unique reference number	123710
Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	10000743

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Maintained
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	360
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Atkins
Headteacher	Mark Lunn
Telephone number	01823 275556
Website	www.wellspringsschool.uk.org/
Email address	office@wellsprings.somerset.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- Wellsprings Primary School is much larger than the average primary school. Numbers on roll have increased by a third since the previous inspection. Nursery pupils attend on a part-time basis.
- The school runs a breakfast club, which is well attended.
- The numbers of pupils who are eligible for pupil premium are broadly in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is above average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan (EHC) is lower than the national average.

- Most pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The number of pupils who start at or leave the school other than at the usual starting or leaving points is greater than the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all year groups, and looked at pupils' books from subjects across the curriculum and at evidence of children's work in the early years. The headteacher and assistant headteacher joined the inspectors for almost all of these activities.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders and the chair of the governing body. The lead inspector had a telephone conversation with a local authority representative.
- Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including information on pupils' attainment and progress, the school's self-evaluation, plans for improvement, minutes of the governing board meetings and records relating to safeguarding arrangements.
- Inspectors spoke with many pupils during visits to classes and at play- and lunchtimes to hear their views of the school. Two members of the school council gave an inspector a tour of the school. Many parents were spoken to when bringing their children to school; their views were taken into account, along with the 26 responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire, Parent View. Inspectors also took account of 20 responses to the staff questionnaire.

Inspection team

Tracy Hannon, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Bragg	Ofsted Inspector
Deborah Tregellas	Ofsted Inspector
Lorna Brackstone	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

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