

Springmead Primary School

Hillyfields, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL7 2HB

Inspection dates

28 February–1 March 2017

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is an inadequate school

- The school has been through a period of turbulence. Senior leadership is fragile. The headteacher is leaving and the governing body is newly in place.
- Leaders' relationships with many parents have irreconcilably broken down. Even though leaders are making improvements, the impact is still too soon to assess.
- The headteacher has not ensured that other leaders have clear roles and responsibilities. As a result, leadership at all levels is not as effective as it should be.
- Leaders do not manage the behaviour of some pupils well enough. They use exclusions too readily. As a result, exclusions are too high, particularly for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Many staff either do not know or do not share the headteacher's vision for improvement. Consequently, staff morale is low.
- The most able pupils are not provided with sufficiently challenging work to help them excel. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved greater depth in writing was below average in both key stages.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress in mathematics and in writing. This is because teachers do not provide them with work that matches their needs effectively.
- Boys in Reception do not achieve as well as girls. Adults do not use information to plan learning that helps boys make better progress.
- Staff do not insist on the highest standard of presentation in books. The quality of pupils' handwriting skills is often not good enough and goes unchallenged.
- Staff are not accurate when assessing pupils' learning and progress. Their expectations are too low of what pupils can achieve.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils are polite and well mannered. They conduct themselves well around school.
- Leadership in the behaviour support base is effective, and pupils are well cared for.
- Adults' expectations are consistently high in Year 6. Pupils make rapid gains in this year.
- The interim board has held the headteacher to account for standards of behaviour and has fulfilled its statutory obligations.
- Children start well in the nursery class. Adults provide an interesting and stimulating environment in which to learn.

Full report

In accordance with section 44(1) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school requires special measures because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Rapidly improve leadership and management by ensuring that:
 - all staff share the leaders' and governors' vision for school improvement and that staff are clear about their role and the part they play in that improvement
 - leaders at all levels are provided with the opportunity and skills to systematically monitor their areas of responsibility
 - the confidence of parents in the leadership of the school is restored
 - internal systems and communication to raise staff morale are developed
 - the leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities becomes effective so that pupils have a more positive experience of school, exclusions reduce and attendance rises.
- Improve pupils' outcomes by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils make better progress in writing to reach the greater depth expected by the end of key stages 1 and 2
 - increasing the progress of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - providing pupils with better opportunities for them to excel in writing
 - having consistently high expectations of what all pupils can achieve in all their lessons
 - developing pupils' writing skills by improving their handwriting and the presentation of their work
 - stretching the most able and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to excel and achieve their best.
- Improve the provision in the early years by:
 - providing a stimulating environment outside to enable the proportion of boys who achieve a good level of development to improve consistently to reach the national average.

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

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- The headteacher, who began in September 2015, has not established or communicated clearly her vision and values. Not enough of the whole school community has confidence in her leadership. The relationship with a large majority of parents has irreconcilably broken down. The headteacher has resigned and is due to leave the school at the end of the spring term. As a result of many significant changes at Springmead Primary School, leadership is fragile and relies heavily on external support for its strategic direction and purpose.
- Leaders introduced a new behaviour policy in September 2016 which has resulted in many more behaviour incidents recorded that leaders consider are of a serious nature. Leaders and staff do not apply the policy consistently and effectively. Many parents, pupils and staff expressed the view that the policy is not working to raise standards of behaviour or provide a supportive environment in which to learn. Inspectors agree.
- There has been a large turnover of staff over the previous 15 months. Many staff, including those who are new, are not clear about their roles and responsibilities to improve the school. Staff state that training does not help them improve their work well enough because it is too generic. Many of those who responded to the staff questionnaire and those who spoke with inspectors, expressed their concern about the deterioration in the quality of education at the school. Many staff said morale is low.
- Leaders have an over-generous view of the quality of pupils' learning. This is because they focus too heavily on what the adults are doing in class rather than the provision for the pupils, particularly the most able pupils. Consequently, in some classes, pupils are provided with work that does not challenge them sufficiently well or move them on in their learning. Assessment information is not used effectively to provide learning to meet individual needs.
- The vast majority of parents who responded to the online questionnaire stated that the school was not effectively led and managed. Most parents would currently not recommend the school. Parents told inspectors that although some aspects of communication have improved, leaders were not effective in ensuring that the most able pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well provided for. Inspectors found that in these areas parents have well-founded concerns.
- The leadership of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is weak because it fails to check well enough that all pupils receive their entitlement to a broad and balanced curriculum. Adults do not have a good enough understanding of how to support these pupils in class. Most of the pupils who have been repeatedly excluded this year have special educational needs and/or disabilities. These pupils do not have equal access to the curriculum and lack the opportunity to make the progress they could.
- New leaders have enthusiasm for their areas of responsibility and possess a clear desire to be effective. They receive little guidance or time to systematically monitor and evaluate the impact of the actions they have taken on the progress that the pupils make. Consequently, some areas of leadership require rapid improvement, such as in

the early years.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced with many additional trips and after-school clubs to enhance pupils' experience. All subjects are taught, but leaders do not rigorously check that the curriculum is adapted well enough for the range of abilities in a class. In too many classes, pupils carry out the same activities irrespective of their starting points or individual learning needs.
- School leaders have not kept the information about the effective use of pupil premium funding up to date on the school website. Leaders have not identified the barriers to learning that disadvantaged pupils face or how they decide on the allocating of funds. The new coordinator for disadvantaged pupils is effective in her work. For example, recently a small number of disadvantaged pupils who are most able visited a local bookshop to enhance their experience of books. Their improved writing about book reviews was displayed.
- There is evidence to show that pupils receive a varied programme of visits and religious education that supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. There was little evidence to show that leaders actively promote pupils' understanding of fundamental British values. In practice, pupils are friendly and generally accepting of each other and their views, but leaders are not ensuring that pupils are prepared as well as possible for life in modern Britain.
- Leadership and provision in the behaviour support base are effective. Staff use a wide range of strategies to ensure that the pupils in the base receive a positive experience in subjects across the curriculum. For example, some of the artwork pupils produced was above age-related expectations and of a very good quality.
- The additional physical education (PE) and sports funding is used well to increase the number of sporting activities on offer to pupils. Those responsible for leadership of PE have strong plans and targets to increase the effectiveness of spending of these funds. Pupils participate in PE lessons enthusiastically and well.
- The local authority is providing extensive support to the school. It has carried out a safeguarding review and a review of teaching and learning to determine the current position of the school. Firm plans are in place to continue this support and restore the confidence of the community in the leadership at Springmead Primary School.

Governance of the school

- The full governing body resigned in June 2016. An interim board, led by a highly experienced chair, has been in place since this point. In March 2017, a new and less experienced governing body takes on this crucial leadership role. Consequently, this aspect of leadership and management is new and the impact of governors' work is unknown.
- The interim board has provided an appropriately high level of challenge for the headteacher, especially about the standards of behaviour at the school. However, the impact of its work has been implemented too slowly. The behaviour policy, introduced in September, has not yet been evaluated. Inspection evidence shows that although many parents, staff and pupils commented that the policy does not work, leaders have not taken effective action to alleviate concerns.

- The chair of the interim board visits the school regularly to check the validity of the information received from the headteacher. The interim board has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of leadership and teaching at the school. Minutes of meetings demonstrate that members focus on the main areas that are needed to improve at the school.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders have made changes to the record-keeping of safeguarding records and these are now compliant, secure and thorough. The necessary checks are made on new staff and recruitment files are in good order. The local authority has checked the documentation to ensure themselves that safeguarding processes and procedures are fully in place.
- Staff receive appropriate training in safeguarding, particularly preventing extremism and radicalisation. Training for first aid and other medical needs is also up to date and fully in place. Accidents are reported appropriately well.
- Pupils receive education about keeping safe when using the internet. However, they told inspectors that they have little instruction on keeping safe using different forms of technology, even though they all used mobile phones and other forms of social media.
- Parents expressed valid concerns about how well leaders deal with bullying and behaviour at school. Pupils told inspectors, and commented through their questionnaire, that bullying does happen but that adults deal with it when it occurs. Pupils understand the different forms of bullying and recognise the upset it causes.
- Pupils spoken to said that teachers keep them safe at school and that they can talk to an adult if they are concerned. Most respondents to the pupil online questionnaire agreed that they feel safe in school and that adults help them to keep safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- The quality of teaching varies within and across year groups. Teachers do not yet have a secure enough understanding of the school's assessment system and consequently, the abilities of pupils are at times under-assessed. This results in teachers having lower expectations of pupils, particularly of the most able pupils in their classes.
- Teachers do not systematically use the information they have regarding pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to plan learning that helps these pupils succeed. Too often, these pupils' books demonstrate that they complete the same activities as other pupils, irrespective of prior ability. They are not provided with suitable work so they can become independent in their learning and succeed.
- At times, teachers lack precise subject knowledge, especially in the teaching of mathematics. This results in most-able pupils having to listen to lengthy, and at times, imprecise explanations, or complete work that is far too easy for them. When the most able pupils are provided with a challenge, they relish the opportunity to show their mathematical skills and capabilities.

- Teachers' deployment of additional adults is mixed. In some classes, support staff focus on ensuring that the pupils are compliant. In these classes, their impact on learning is minimal. In other classes, such as Year 6, support staff are skilful and effectively question pupils so that the learning moves forward and pupils are appropriately supported.
- Adults do not routinely expect pupils to produce work of a high standard. Even following a reintroduction of the presentation policy in January 2017, teachers have not consistently ensured that the standard is maintained. Pupils' handwriting and letter formation is not checked well enough and is, at times, poor.
- Staff have received training in the teaching of phonics. They provide learning for groups of pupils so that the teaching of sounds is suitable for the differing starting points of the pupils. Teachers plan for support staff to teach the less able pupils continually. Over time, lower-ability pupils have not made the progress they should. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected by the end of Year 1 was below the national average.
- Pupils who read to inspectors showed an enjoyment of books and spoke highly of the new library facilities at the school. Pupils in Year 1 use their sounds as their first choice when reading unfamiliar words. In English lessons, pupils in Year 2 enjoyed the Roald Dahl book they were studying.
- Where practice is strongest, teachers have high expectations and develop interesting learning activities. Pupils show enthusiasm for their learning and participate well. For example, in Year 4, pupils were creating slides in their computing lessons on their topics of the Egyptians. Pupils adeptly used animations to enhance their work. They helped each other when necessary and worked quickly and efficiently.
- The standard of work in subjects other than English and mathematics varies too widely. In some classes, pupils carry out the same worksheets, which limit the most able pupils from showing their capabilities. In other classes, pupils are provided with stimulating experiences in subjects such as geography and French which extend their thinking and develop their skills.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Inadequate

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is inadequate. This is because some pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in the main school are not provided with equality of opportunity and are prevented from learning due to frequent exclusions. Leaders do not provide appropriate care and provision for excluded pupils once they return to prevent reoccurrence. Leaders resort to exclusions too quickly.
- Not enough adults provide systematic, stimulating and engaging activities for the most able pupils to excel. Consequently, pupils' attitudes to their learning are not always as positive as they could be and low-level disruption goes unchecked. Across year groups, teachers do not promote consistent expectations of learning behaviour.
- The standard of pupils' presentation of their work varies across the school. Adults do

not show younger pupils how to achieve the best quality of letter formation well enough. Where adults expect more of pupils, for example in a Year 6 class, pupils respond well to the consistently high expectations and produce work in most subjects to the best of their capabilities.

- Pupils who attend the behaviour support base are well cared for. Adults ensure that pupils are supported well and consistently. Consequently, these pupils are making progress both socially and academically in a safe and welcoming environment.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement. This is because adults do not provide learning activities that meet the needs of groups of pupils in their class well enough. Consequently, some pupils become bored or frustrated and their interest and focus wanes. Low-level disruption was a feature of some classes as a result.
- Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Staff ensure that absences are followed up and appropriate measures are put in place for those who are persistently absent. However, the attendance of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average and has been in the lowest 10% for the last two years.
- Pupils are polite and well mannered. During the inspection, pupils welcomed inspectors and held doors open without prompting. Good relations and friendships with each other were evident at playtimes and lunchtimes. Most pupils who responded to their online questionnaire agreed that teachers encourage them to be friendly with each other.
- When asked to share their ideas and reasons, pupils are articulate and speak maturely. For example, during a science visit, boys in Year 2 demonstrated their prior knowledge of tree frogs and how these amphibians eat. One boy ably used correct scientific and technical vocabulary as he confidently explained his understanding to the group.

Outcomes for pupils

Requires improvement

- Over time, the progress that pupils have made from their individual starting points on entry to key stage 2 has not been high enough. This is because the quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not consistently good.
- In 2016, pupils in Year 6 made broadly similar progress to their peers nationally in reading and mathematics. However, the proportion of pupils in key stage 2 who made good progress in writing was significantly below other pupils nationally. This was particularly the case for the middle ability and most able pupils. Inspection evidence shows that the most able pupils are still not provided with enough opportunities to excel in writing.
- Pupils' attainment in reading at the end of key stage 2 was above national averages in 2016. Pupils attained more in national tests than the school assessment system showed, which demonstrates the capabilities of the pupils at Springmead Primary School.
- In mathematics in 2016 at key stage 2, the proportion of pupils who reached the standard expected for their age was in line with the national average and more pupils

reached the higher standard than their national peers. Disadvantaged pupils achieved significantly less well in mathematics. Leaders have changed the way that mathematics is taught, using a greater selection of resources and practical apparatus. The impact of these changes are too early to fully assess on the progress that pupils make.

- At the end of key stage 1 in 2016, the proportion of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics was above that of their national peers. However, this did not represent good progress from the end of Reception for some pupils, particularly those who are most able and boys.
- Inspection evidence demonstrates that leadership of key stage 1 is improving and changes have been made to the topics taught, so that they appeal to the interests of boys. This is starting to have an impact on the progress boys make. Improving the progress of the most able pupils in key stage 1 remains a priority.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities do not make enough progress. This is because learning is not planned well enough to accurately meet their needs. In 2016 at the end of Year 6, the progress these pupils made was significantly below others nationally and in the lowest 10% for writing and mathematics.
- The achievement of pupils in the Year 1 phonics screening check varies. In 2016, the proportion of pupils who reached the expected standard was below that found nationally. Evidence seen on this inspection indicates that the quality of teaching of phonics continues to vary and is not yet consistently good.
- The progress that disadvantaged pupils make varies across the school. In-school assessment information indicates that where the strongest practice was seen, these pupils are achieving well and evidence from their exercise books demonstrates strong progress at the same rate as their peers.
- The progress of the most able pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities in subjects other than English and mathematics requires improvement. In too many classes, all pupils complete the same activities in subjects such as science and geography, so do not have sufficient opportunities to demonstrate their skills.

Early years provision

Requires improvement

- Children start school with individual skills and abilities that are broadly typical for their age. In 2016, children left Reception with a good level of development that was below the national average. The achievement of boys has been lower than that of girls for the last three years. Boys are not as well prepared for the challenges of Year 1.
- Leadership of the early years requires rapid improvement. New leadership in this area is yet to have an impact on the progress the children make. Currently, leaders do not analyse and use assessment information well enough to plan learning activities so that children can make good and targeted progress from their starting points.
- Although all areas of the curriculum are in place, the outside area lacks sufficient stimulating and interesting activities so that more children develop their social, communication and language skills. There are fewer opportunities for children to write and practise their number skills when learning outside. The most able children are not

routinely challenged.

- Children behave well. They understand the rules and routines and follow them as best they can. Pupils demonstrate their understanding of the routines during 'tidying up' time. They perform their roles and responsibilities well. But during adult-led lesson times, low-level disruption at times goes unchecked so some children do not make as much progress as they could.
- In nursery, children get off to a good start. Learning activities are thoughtfully planned with the interests of the children in mind. In one session, boys were choosing both the nursery rhymes and the manner in which everyone should sing the song. As they robustly sang 'there's a spider on my shoe', children laughed and congratulated each other for their success.
- In lessons where children learn their early sounds and practise their writing, children are focused and concentrate well. Adults' own pronunciation of sounds varies. Where it is accurate, for example, in a small group session, children practised the 'ow' sound. They were able to use the correct terminology easily and had further success when transferring their knowledge of sounds into their writing. However, adults sometimes do not pronounce sounds with sufficient accuracy to set a good model for children.
- Adults keep records of children's learning well. Learning journeys reflect all the areas of the curriculum and are of high quality. They demonstrate that all children receive an equal access to the curriculum.
- Building works are underway to provide new nursery facilities so that the youngest children in the school have an enhanced environment in which to learn.

School details

Unique reference number	117325
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10026418

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	435
Appropriate authority	Interim executive board
Chair	Peter Martin
Headteacher	Jennifer Moles
Telephone number	01707 331508
Website	www.springmead.herts.sch.uk
Email address	admin@springmead.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	28–29 January 2014

Information about this school

- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about the effective use of its pupil premium. No barriers for learning have been identified and no dates for review provided.
- This is a larger than average primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are in receipt of pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is in line with national averages.
- The vast majority of pupils speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is rising over time and is broadly in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils who have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is

well below the national average.

- There have been a significant number of staff and leadership changes since the previous inspection.
- The school has specially resourced provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities for eight pupils in a behaviour support base.
- There is a breakfast and after-school club, managed by an external organisation.
- The headteacher started at the school in September 2015 and is due to leave at the end of March 2017.
- The school has been governed by an interim board since the resignation of the governing body in June 2016. A new governing body is due to be reinstated in March 2017.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors gathered a range of evidence to judge the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. This included observing learning in all classes, some of which were jointly seen with senior leaders.
- The inspectors spoke with pupils and scrutinised books from a wide range of subjects, to take account of the work that has been done and the progress that pupils make across the curriculum.
- The teaching of phonics was observed. Inspectors listened to a number of pupils read from Year 1 and Year 6.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and the chair of the interim board. The inspectors also held meetings with representatives of the local authority.
- Inspectors examined a wide range of documentation. They also scrutinised school records around child protection and the recruitment checks made by school leaders when employing staff.
- The inspectors held a meeting and spoke informally with some parents to gather their views. Parental views were also considered from 282 online responses to Ofsted's Parent View questionnaire together with comments provided on the free-text service.
- The inspectors held a meeting with staff and leaders to gain their views. The lead inspector took account of 48 views through their responses to Ofsted's staff questionnaire.
- The views of 86 pupils were considered through their responses to Ofsted's pupil questionnaire. An inspector met with a group of pupils to gather their views.

Inspection team

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Paula Masters	Ofsted Inspector
Nathan Lowe	Ofsted Inspector
Tania Perry	Ofsted Inspector

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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