

Inspection of Sprites Primary Academy

Stonechat Road, Ipswich, Suffolk IP2 0SA

Inspection dates: 15–16 October 2019

Overall effectiveness

Inadequate

The quality of education

Inadequate

Behaviour and attitudes

Inadequate

Personal development

Inadequate

Leadership and management

Inadequate

Early years provision

Inadequate

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Inadequate

What is it like to attend this school?

For too long, pupils at Sprites Primary Academy have had an inadequate quality of education. The school was judged to be inadequate in 2018. Leaders and the trust have not brought the much-needed improvements to the school since this time.

Too many pupils behave poorly, which disrupts their learning and that of their classmates. The standard of behaviour in the school has declined since inspectors reported on it in 2018. Often, pupils are not interested, enthused or excited about their learning. Some pupils do not understand why it is important for them to remember what they have been taught.

Pupils are looked after well at school. Bullying does not happen frequently. Pupils' well-being is well considered. If pupils are unkind to one another, they get help from staff to sort things out, for example through support from the school's pastoral team. Pupils are positive about their regular 'Thrive' sessions, reporting that this helps them to work well in a group and settle in the classroom.

Many parents are positive about the school's work and the new leadership in place. However, some parents said that they are worried about the quality of education, poor behaviour and a lack of support for their children. Many of these concerned parents have children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).

Pupils like the increasing number of clubs on offer, including chess, sports, art and 'slime' (science). Pupils also look forward to the school visits in each year group and, in particular, the Year 6 residential trip.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

There have been many changes in leadership and staffing since the previous inspection in 2018. This has been an unsettled time for the school. The new interim headteacher has worked hard to try to deal with the many weaknesses at the school. However, these problems are deep-rooted, and it has been hard to resolve them quickly. The quality of education remains poor.

The trust has failed to deal with the inadequacies found during the previous inspection quickly or effectively. The trust's support to the school, while wide-ranging, has lacked specific focus and impact. It has still not brought sustained or rapid improvement in the quality of education. The trust has also not ensured that leaders and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. Leaders are not clear about how they can help improve the school quickly.

Pupils do not learn well in reading, writing and mathematics, despite leaders' focus on this. Other subjects such as religious studies (RE), art and science have been neglected. This means that pupils leave the school with significant gaps in their knowledge and understanding. Pupils do not achieve well enough at the end of key stages 1 and 2 and are not well prepared for the next stages of their education.

The curriculum is poorly planned and delivered. It does not meet pupils' needs. This is especially, but not exclusively, the case for pupils with SEND. Over time, teaching has been, and remains, weak. Staff have not been given sufficient training in how and what to teach in different subjects. They do not have the required subject knowledge to teach all subjects well. As a result, expectations about how well pupils should be achieving are too low.

Low standards are apparent in the teaching of phonics and reading. The school's chosen phonics programme and approach to reading are not understood and therefore not well used by teachers. Teaching does not follow the agreed programme. Teachers do not change their approach to help pupils that are struggling. As in most other subjects, teachers do not check how well pupils are developing their understanding of phonics and reading.

Leaders have not considered how best to teach writing to meet the needs of the pupils. The writing curriculum is too narrow. Leaders have not trained staff well enough to deliver the expectations of the national curriculum. Teachers are not sure what content and skills they need to teach pupils to write in different ways. Consequently, pupils do not practise enough, and not enough pupils write well.

The curriculum for mathematics has more structure than other subjects because teachers use a step-by-step programme. However, teachers do not adapt what they are teaching to ensure that it meets pupils' needs. Teachers do not make sure that pupils have understood basic concepts before they are moved on in their learning.

Pupils with SEND do not do well at Sprites. Staff do not have the skills to provide the precise support that pupils require. While adults want the best for pupils, they have not had the training and support they need to help pupils with SEND effectively.

Leaders have not planned the early years curriculum well enough. Despite having a range of indoor and outdoor resources, too often activities are not well considered to make sure that children are developing early reading, writing and number skills successfully. Children are not well prepared to move into Year 1. Despite these weaknesses, children settle into school quickly because adults help them to feel safe, secure and welcome.

Adults' expectations of how well pupils behave are consistently too low. Pupils are often distracted, and lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour that goes unchecked by staff. Many pupils have negative attitudes towards their learning. These negative attitudes are shown in the way pupils treat their books, their general behaviour and how they talk about what they learn. Pupils' personal development is hindered by the gaps that the weak quality of education creates in their knowledge and understanding.

Recently, staff morale has improved. Staff report they have felt pressured in the past by leaders, but say that leaders are now more considerate of their work-life balance.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Pupils are safe in school because leaders have made safeguarding a priority. Leaders know the children and their families well. They make sure that all staff are suitable to work with children. The designated safeguarding lead, who is also the family liaison officer, ensures that families get the early help they need. Staff receive regular safeguarding training, which helps them to identify those pupils who may need help.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The trust has not secured improvements since the previous inspection. The trust needs to be specific about the support they provide, rigorously check the impact this is having on raising standards across all curriculum areas, and take effective action to make improvements.
- The trust needs to ensure that all leaders and staff are clear about their roles and take responsibility for the jobs they have. Leaders and staff need to be held to account to ensure that they carry out their roles effectively.
- The curriculum in the early years is not sequenced appropriately or well considered to prepare children for the next stages of their education. Leaders need to provide staff with clear guidance and training about how young children learn. Children need opportunities to acquire and use early reading, writing and mathematics skills. Leaders need to ensure that the curriculum and teaching support children's subsequent learning in key stages 1 and 2 throughout all curriculum subjects.
- Leaders have not thought carefully enough about what the curriculum at Sprites needs to be like for all pupils to achieve well. Equally, the curriculum does not facilitate pupils' personal development. Assessment is underdeveloped and used ineffectively in all subjects, including reading, writing and mathematics. The planning of the curriculum in all subjects needs to consider what leaders want pupils to learn, when this will happen and how this will be achieved.
- There is an inconsistent approach to the teaching of reading (including phonics), writing and mathematics. This inconsistency confuses staff and they have no clear direction about leaders' expectations. Teachers struggle to adapt learning to meet the needs of pupils, including those with SEND. Leaders need to ensure that staff have the right training to implement a high-quality curriculum that supports pupils' needs. This is so that pupils gain the knowledge they need to help them become successful learners.
- Too many pupils do not value their learning, and low-level disruption is too commonplace in lessons. Leaders need to ensure that the behaviour systems are understood and used consistently to support pupils to behave well.
- It is recommended that the school should not appoint newly qualified teachers.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use Ofsted Parent View information when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

If you're not happy with the inspection or the report, you can [complain to Ofsted](#).

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

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.

School details

Unique reference number	141985
Local authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	10110217
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	385
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair	Jeremy King
Headteacher	David Hitchin (interim headteacher)
Website	www.spritesprimary.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2018

Information about this school

- Sprites Primary Academy is a larger than average primary school.
- The school converted to an academy in 2015 under the REAch2 Academy Trust.
- The early years provision consists of a Nursery class and a Reception class.
- The deputy headteacher started at the school in September 2018 and took up the role of interim headteacher in September 2019.
- There have been a significant number of staff and leadership changes since the previous inspection. The majority of leaders have taken up their posts recently.
- The school had an Ofsted monitoring inspection in January 2019.
- The local governing body has recently been disbanded. An interim executive board is currently in place.

Information about this inspection

We carried out this inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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.

- During this inspection, inspectors held meetings with the interim headteacher, the special needs coordinator and the assistant headteacher. Inspectors also met with the curriculum leaders for reading, writing, mathematics, science, RE, art and physical education.
- The lead inspector met the school business manager and the designated safeguarding leader, to discuss the single central record and the safeguarding procedures and systems in place.
- The lead inspector met with three members of the trust including the deputy chief executive officer, the director of excellence and standards, and the deputy director of education. The lead inspector also had a telephone conversation with a trustee.
- The subjects of reading, writing, mathematics, science, RE and art were considered as part of this inspection. The lead inspector also checked the curriculum provision in other subjects. Inspectors spoke to curriculum leaders, visited lessons, looked at a range of pupils' work, and met with teachers and pupils. The lead inspector visited phonics lessons, heard pupils read and observed staff reading to pupils as part of phonics, reading and 'story time' sessions.
- Inspectors considered a wide range of pupils' work from different year groups to evaluate pupils' learning in English, mathematics, science, RE, art and throughout the wider curriculum.
- Inspectors spoke to pupils about their experiences of school life and their learning to find out what it is like to be a pupil at Sprites Primary Academy. Additionally, the 40 responses to the online questionnaire for pupils were considered. Inspectors also observed pupils' behaviour in lessons and during break and lunchtime.
- Inspectors considered the views of parents gathered at the end of the first day of the inspection and the beginning of the second day of the inspection. They also took account of the 27 responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, as well as the 27 free-text responses.
- Inspectors took account of the seven responses to Ofsted's online staff questionnaire and met with teachers at various times to talk about the school's work.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of documents, including those related to curriculum planning and development, safeguarding arrangements, behaviour, attendance, the school's evaluation of its own performance, the school's transformation plan and the work that has been carried out and brokered by the trust to support the school.

Inspection team

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Her Majesty's Inspector

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