

Inspection of a good school: Spurcroft Primary School

Spurcroft Road, Thatcham, Berkshire RG19 3XX

Inspection dates:

5 and 6 October 2021

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this initial (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a full inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a full (section 5) inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils love the many opportunities that staff at Spurcroft provide for them. During their time at this school, pupils go on memorable school trips, compete in sporting events, learn a musical instrument and take on leadership roles, such as ambassadors for science and health and well-being. Pupils feel lucky to play on the extensive outdoor equipment and the chance to relax with their friends in the custom-built huts.

Pupils say that they feel protected and safe. They say that bullying hardly happens. Staff are always on hand to check in with pupils whenever it is needed. Staff put pupils' happiness first. The behaviour of pupils around school is mostly positive. Many are enthused with their learning, but some pupils told the inspector that some of their classmates don't always listen to the teacher straight away. Some pupils have conversations when they should be getting on with their work and disturb others.

Across the school, teachers' expectations are not consistently high. In some classes, pupils do not take pride in their written work. Some pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), do not get the right support to help them learn to read.

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has hampered where leaders and governors would have liked the school to be with its curriculum plans right now. That said, in most subjects, the new content is planned and teachers are now delivering it for the first time. In some of the newly planned subjects, leaders have not clearly outlined the essential knowledge that must be taught. Instead, there is a focus on pupils engaging in activities that focus on skills. As a result, pupils are not always taught the very best of a subject.

A strength of the school's curriculum is mathematics. Teachers set high expectations and have strong subject knowledge to explain topics clearly. Pupils learn mathematical vocabulary well and they regularly practise their times tables and number facts as well as develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills. Pupils with SEND are well catered for in lessons. Adults provide careful support and hands-on resources to help pupils master ideas. In the early years, leaders ensure that the youngest children receive focused teaching that helps them learn the foundations of number securely. Across the key stages, teachers use assessment well in mathematics to find out what pupils remember.

Staff instil a love of reading in pupils. Teachers promote the importance of daily reading by sharing their book recommendations in class. This excites pupils to want to read new authors. Events, such as author visits, inspire pupils to read. However, the school's approach to teaching phonics is not working as well as leaders had hoped. Some staff have not had up-to-date training, which has led to inconsistencies in the teaching of early reading. Pupils are not getting the depth of reading practice they need to become fluent readers. There is not a well-structured approach to help pupils who have fallen behind in their reading. Sometimes, the planned catch-up sessions do not provide the right support to help pupils learn to read.

Leaders have established clear and well-understood systems that help pick up whether a child may have additional needs. The weekly 'surgeries' ensure a professional dialogue between leaders and teachers to pinpoint what help a child may need. The classroom provision for pupils with SEND enables these pupils to learn alongside their peers and be fully included. Adults who work one-to-one with pupils provide effective support.

Although pupils focus well in class and are keen to complete their work, there are times when pupils become distracted. Staff do not always put a stop to this behaviour immediately, which has an impact on learning.

Leaders are committed to an enriching curriculum offer for all pupils, in particular disadvantaged pupils. Leaders' pledge is that every child in the school will represent the school in a sports team by the time they leave primary school. Assemblies promote diversity, tolerance and kindness in pupils.

Staff speak highly about how leaders support them in school. They feel that leaders listen and look for ways to reduce workload. Governors visit the school regularly to check that staff are well looked after and happy in the workplace.

In discussion with the headteacher, the inspector agreed that how the curriculum is planned and taught may usefully serve as a focus for the next inspection.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and governors have clear oversight of how to protect children from risk and harm. The school's safeguarding team meets weekly to 'triage' any concerns or information that have come to light. Staff are confident in knowing how to raise a concern.

Staff work closely with families and other agencies to act in the best interests of the child. Effective communication and information-sharing ensure that children get the help they may need. Governors talk to pupils to check that they feel safe in school.

The headteacher follows all procedures meticulously in managing any allegations against adults.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In some subjects, knowledge is not carefully sequenced and linked to what has been previously taught. Plans tend to focus mainly on skills. This means that pupils are not building knowledge securely over time. Leaders need to ensure that all subjects are coherently planned with the essential knowledge that pupils need to know from early years to Year 6.
- Staff's subject knowledge is not strong across all subjects. As a result, staff choose tasks that do not always help pupils to learn knowledge. Leaders need to ensure that staff are well trained, to know how to deliver and assess the curriculum effectively so that pupils acquire the knowledge they need.
- Not all staff are expertly trained to teach the school's chosen phonics programme. Consequently, in some lessons, pupils do not always get the instruction and practice they need to develop reading fluency. For pupils that have fallen behind in the phonics programme, additional catch-up sessions are sometimes not well planned to help these pupils learn to read. Leaders need to train all staff to deliver effectively all aspects of a systematic, synthetic phonics programme.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called a section 8 inspection of a good or outstanding school, because it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on a section 8 inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a section 5 inspection. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the section 8 inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the section 8 inspection as a section 5 inspection immediately.

This is the first section 8 inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2016.

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 information from Ofsted Parent View 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 are the school and you are 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	109937
Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	10200127
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	442
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Sara Dutfield
Headteacher	Kate Flowerdew
Website	spurcroft.w-berks.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	29 and 30 September 2016, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher was appointed to the role in September 2017, having previously been deputy headteacher. The chair of the governing body has been elected to the role since the last inspection, having previously been a member of the governing body. Several new members of the governing body have joined since the last inspection.
- The school is currently using one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and has taken that into account in his evaluation.
- The lead inspector met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, the inclusion team leader and a range of school staff. He also met with a group of governors, including the chair of the governing body, and a school improvement officer from the local authority.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the lead inspector spoke with staff and pupils. He met with members of the designated safeguarding team to examine their

knowledge, records and actions. This included reviewing checks on the safer recruitment of staff. He sampled case files to explore how the school identifies and supports pupils at risk of harm and considered a qualifying safeguarding concern from March 2017.

- The lead inspector spoke to pupils from different year groups and considered 147 responses to Ofsted’s online pupil survey.
- The views of staff, including 45 responses to Ofsted’s online staff survey, were considered.
- The 72 responses to Ofsted’s Parent View, including 36 written responses, were also taken into account.
- The lead inspector did deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. This involved discussion with leaders about these subjects and the curriculum plans, visits to lessons, scrutiny of pupils’ work, and discussions with pupils, teachers and teaching assistants from the lessons visited about the subjects.

Inspection team

James Broadbridge, lead inspector

Her Majesty’s Inspector

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