

Inspection of Spellbrook CofE Primary School

London Road, Spellbrook, Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire CM23 4BA

Inspection dates: 9 and 10 November 2021

Overall effectiveness	Good
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Early years provision	Good
Previous inspection grade	Requires improvement

What is it like to attend this school?

It is a pleasure to be at this school. Pupils feel respected and cared for well. Pupils, staff, governors and parents all mention the 'family feel' where everyone looks out for each other. Pupils behave sensibly and politely.

As pupils get older, they enjoy opportunities to take on responsibilities around school, no matter how small. The peer mediators spoke confidently about how they solve pupil conflicts at breaktime and lunchtime. The worship team talked happily about their contribution to a recent church service. One pupil said, 'Helping the teacher in the classroom is just as important as some of the other special jobs we can have.'

Teachers want every pupil to enjoy coming to school, so they make sure classrooms are happy, lively spaces. Pupils' talk during lessons is focused and linked to their learning. The activity days staff organise complement pupils' learning well. Pupils spoke keenly about their recent capoeira workshop, where they learned a new sport and its origins to develop their knowledge of other cultures.

Pupils know about bullying, but say it rarely occurs. They say adults would help if it were to happen. This care from adults ensures pupils feel safe and can achieve their best.

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

Staff at all levels have worked hard over the past few years to develop the school. Leaders have made appropriate changes to the curriculum for most subjects. Where leaders have done this well, they have set out curriculum plans which show what knowledge pupils need to learn. They have trained teachers to teach this knowledge to pupils. For example, in mathematics, teachers select appropriate activities that help pupils to learn mathematical ideas. Pupils' recall of these is impressive.

In a few subjects, teachers select activities that may not best support pupils to learn and apply important knowledge. Leaders know curriculum plans for these subjects should be clearer. They have identified actions to address this quickly.

Leaders help teachers to identify if a pupil may have special educational needs and/or disabilities. They do this quickly and carefully, guiding teachers on how to help pupils. For example, leaders will observe and work with the pupil in class to show teachers what support the pupil needs to achieve well.

Leaders have made reading a top priority. Staff have been trained to teach early reading well. Teachers spot pupils who are not keeping up. Teaching assistants are skilled at teaching the school's reading programme. They work with these pupils to help them catch up. Pupils enjoy the books their teachers read to them. Older pupils spoke positively about teachers recommending them books based on their interests.

Some pupils have a buddy who reads with them. This helps them to feel more confident with reading. As a result of the effective leadership and teaching of reading, almost every pupil is ready to read more challenging books in key stage 2.

A very small number of pupils finish the phonics programme before they are ready to read new words. These pupils know the phonics sounds they should, but are not fluent readers when they enter key stage 2. Leaders know they need to refine their processes to provide additional strategies to help these pupils.

Pupils have lots of chances to develop their skills and knowledge in a wide range of areas. Pupils sing confidently and well. They all learn to play a musical instrument. Pupils become skilled in art, and they are proud to see their work included in the school's beautiful displays.

Leaders organise extra-curricular activities thoughtfully to prepare pupils for life in modern Britain. These experiences teach pupils about different people and cultures. For example, pupils learned new sports in a recent workshop relating to the Paralympic Games. Pupils learned that sports can be adapted to support all people.

Children in the early years are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Teachers use well-planned activities, based on assessments and children's interests, to help children develop knowledge and skills effectively. Teachers and teaching assistants use consistent phrases and hand signals that teach children about behaviour expectations and routines. Children settle quickly into school and develop a love of learning that continues into key stage 1 and beyond.

Leaders have worked hard to improve attendance. There is a robust policy that staff understand and follow. This has helped pupils' attendance to improve more recently.

Leaders ensure staff feel valued. They provide professional development opportunities for all staff. Governors consider staff's workload. They question leaders about work practices and visit school to check these with staff. Staff work together to improve the school to best support the pupils. Parents recognise these improvements. There are strong, supportive relationships among all in the school community.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Appropriate checks are completed for those adults visiting or working in the school. Staff and governors complete training that helps them to identify pupils who may be at risk of harm. Staff understand their responsibility to report any concerns straight away. Leaders respond to these issues quickly to get pupils and families the support they need.

The curriculum guides teachers to explain concepts about health and relationships in an age-appropriate way. Pupils know the 'funny tummy feeling' means they have a worry to share with a trusted adult.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- Leaders have designed their curriculum well in most subjects. Curriculum planning for some subjects is in the early stages of development. The result is that teachers are not well supported in planning a sequence of lessons with appropriate activities that will help pupils to understand important knowledge in these subjects. For this reason, the transitional arrangements have been applied. Leaders need to ensure that all curriculum plans are clear and implemented as intended.
- A very small number of pupils do not learn to read fluently by the end of key stage 1. They are not fully confident when reading more challenging texts as they get older. Leaders should make sure all pupils can read and understand unfamiliar words quickly.

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	117405
Local authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	10207072
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	102
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Fay Clark
Headteacher	Jeremy Fisher
Website	www.spellbrook.herts.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24 and 25 April 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Information about this school

- Spellbrook Primary School is a Church of England school. It is part of the Diocese of St Albans.
- The religious character of the school was inspected under section 48 of the Education Act (2005) in October 2016 and was judged to be good.
- The school is part of the Envision Schools Partnership. These schools work collaboratively to deliver school support across the primary phase.
- The school has undergone significant changes to leadership since the last inspection. The headteacher started in April 2020.
- There is a breakfast club run by the school.

Information about this inspection

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

This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with school leaders and have taken that into account in their evaluation.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, early years leader and special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met in person and remotely with governors and a local authority representative.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives into these subjects: early reading, mathematics, science and history.
- For each deep dive, inspectors met with subject leaders, looked at curriculum plans, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers and teaching assistants, spoke to some pupils about their learning, listened to a sample of pupils read and looked at samples of pupils' work. The lead inspector also looked at curriculum plans and spoke to leaders about some other subjects.
- To inspect safeguarding, the lead inspector held meetings with the designated safeguarding lead and other staff and reviewed documentation, including the single central record of recruitment and vetting checks.
- The lead inspector reviewed a range of school documentation and policies, including records of governors' meetings, reports from external advisers and information relating to pupils' attendance and behaviour.
- Inspectors gathered pupils' views by speaking to groups of pupils and speaking to pupils at lunchtime and in lessons. There were no responses to Ofsted's pupil survey.
- Inspectors gathered parents' views via the 31 responses and 19 free-text responses submitted to the online survey, Ofsted Parent View.
- Inspectors gathered staff members' views by speaking to several of them. Inspectors took account of the 20 responses to Ofsted's staff survey.

Inspection team

Daniel Short, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Linda Allison

Ofsted Inspector

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