

Inspection of The Spinney Primary School

Hayster Drive, Cherry Hinton, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire CB1 9PB

Inspection dates: 28 and 29 November 2023

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

The quality of education

Requires improvement

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Good

Leadership and management

Requires improvement

Early years provision

Requires improvement

Previous inspection grade

Outstanding

This school was last inspected under section 5 of the Education Act 2005 15 years ago and judged 'Outstanding' under a previous inspection framework. This reflected the school's overall effectiveness under the inspection framework in use at the time.

From then until November 2020, the school was exempted by law from routine inspection, so there has been a longer gap than usual between graded inspections under section 5 of the Act. Judgements in this report are based on the current inspection framework and also reflect changes that may have happened at any point since the last graded inspection.

What is it like to attend this school?

Pupils are keen to learn and do well. Many have positive attitudes to their learning. They are diligent and hardworking. Pupils value making friends from different nationalities. Pupils like bringing in experiences from home and sharing them at school. They are respectful of the school rules and the school values.

Pupils know staff care about them. They are confident staff check the class 'worry box' and will help them. Pupils are comfortable and secure at school. They get along well together.

Reading and mathematics are among pupils' favourite lessons. They know staff want them to succeed. Most pupils achieve well in English and mathematics by the time they leave the school. However, pupils in all year groups need clearer guidance from adults on how to deepen their knowledge across other areas of the curriculum. Pupils who find learning tricky and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) do not receive enough specific support to help them achieve well.

Pupils relish various leadership roles. Older pupils are proud to be buddies to younger children. Pupils are enthusiastic about the trips and residential they go on. Many attend clubs such as football, choir, multi-sports, Italian and tabletop games.

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

The school is emerging from a period of turbulence. Leaders have worked hard to bring stability to the school and maintain everyone's well-being. This has been appreciated by parents and staff.

Leaders have ensured that pupils continue to achieve well in English and mathematics by the end of key stage 2. Mathematics teaching across the school is a strength. The curriculum from Reception to Year 6 has been recently updated to ensure that pupils gain knowledge in a logical order through leaders' chosen approach. Staff have had training on these new curriculum approaches.

However, there are aspects of the curriculum, including in early years, which are not fully developed. The wider curriculum does not lay out in enough detail the precise knowledge pupils must know. Therefore, staff are not clear enough on what exactly pupils must understand and in what depth. As a result, pupils are set work that is often too broad or not ambitious enough. This limits their achievement across the curriculum.

Systems are in place to check what pupils have learned. However, these are not sufficiently robust. Due to a current lack of precision within the wider curriculum design, staff are not certain what these checks on pupils' learning need to specifically contain. Therefore, gaps in learning are not precisely identified. Essential opportunities to then support pupils to catch up are missed or not maximised.

Pupils with SEND access the full curriculum. Pupils who need extra support are given help in lessons. However, staff are not fully confident in knowing how best to adapt provision to precisely address pupils' specific learning gaps or catch up on missed learning. Additional support programmes do not happen systematically or with enough rigor. As a result, some pupils with SEND or pupils needing additional help do not achieve as well as they could.

The reading curriculum is well thought out. Where staff have good subject knowledge, reading is taught well. However, not all reading activities meet the high expectations intended. A new phonics programme has recently been introduced. Staff are getting to grips with how to deliver this consistently well. Younger readers do not get enough regular practice to rehearse new sounds in their reading. Phonics books are not accurately matched to their reading ability. Checks on how well pupils are reading are not sufficiently frequent. As a result, weaker readers do not catch up quickly enough.

Pupils behave well. In early years, children learn happily and cooperatively. They quickly settle into routines. Older pupils act as good role models. Pupils who need extra support to manage how they feel are supported. On occasion, pupils' chatter distracts others. However, teachers do act to address this. Pupils attend school regularly.

The personal, health, social and emotional education curriculum content ensures that pupils have a mature understanding of equality and diversity. They engage sensibly in topical conversations and are inquisitive about the world around them. Pupils know how to stay safe online and how to have healthy lifestyles. Pupils learn about British values, such as democracy, through elections to leadership roles.

The recently appointed governing board have the required expertise to meet their statutory duties. They are working at pace to support the school to continue its upward trajectory. However, currently they do not have enough of a strategic oversight of school improvement.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The wider curriculum, including in early years, is not sufficiently precise in outlining the detailed knowledge pupils need to learn. This means that pupils are not acquiring knowledge in sufficient depth. The school needs to ensure that precise knowledge is clearly signposted in the wider curriculum so that staff know exactly what to teach. Staff then need to provide learning opportunities that are

suitably ambitious for all pupils and allow pupils to demonstrate that they can recall the knowledge in the detail intended.

- Across the school, including in early years, checks on what pupils have learned are not robust or precise enough. This means that specific gaps in pupils' knowledge are not always accurately identified or addressed. Leaders need to ensure that staff know how to identify and then respond swiftly to gaps in learning, especially for those pupils with SEND or for those who find learning tricky. Staff need to adapt provision accordingly and maximise learning opportunities to address these gaps as quickly as possible.
- Checks on pupils who need extra help with reading are not happening systematically. As a result, these pupils have reading books that are not accurately matched to their reading ability and are not catching up as quickly as they could. The school needs to ensure that staff have the required expert training to support pupils to get better at reading. Teachers need to ensure that these pupils have access to an appropriate level of books, that they read often and expectations are raised for weaker readers.
- A new governing board has only just been appointed. This means the strategic vision for the school's continued improvement needs updating so governors can provide appropriate challenge and support. Governors and school leaders need to work with all stakeholders to ensure that the mechanisms are in place to support the school strategically to realise its vision and further strengthen its leadership capacity.

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.

Further information

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

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' is used to mean pupils with SEND; pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	110765
Local authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	10255032
Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	205
Appropriate authority	Local authority
Chair of governing body	Beverly Jones
Interim Headteacher	Mona Paalanen
Website	www.spinney.cambs.sch.uk
Dates of previous inspection	11 and 12 December 2008, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The school has had a period of two interim headships since 2022.
- The current interim headteacher is the substantive deputy headteacher. She took over the full-time interim headship role in September 2023. She is supported by an interim deputy headteacher, who is a senior teacher at the school.
- In the academic year 2022 to 2023, there was a joint interim headteacher who supported the school for two days a week. This was a headteacher from another local school.
- The local authority established an interim executive board to oversee the governance of the school from April 2022 to August 2023.
- A new governing body was appointed in September 2023.
- A substantive headteacher has been recruited externally and will start in January 2024.
- The school runs its own before- and after-school clubs.
- The school currently uses three unregistered alternative providers, two of which are commissioned by the local authority.

Information about this inspection

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

Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- The inspectors held meetings with the interim headteacher, interim deputy headteacher, subject leaders, teachers and support staff.
- The inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics, geography and design and technology. For each deep dive, the inspectors spoke to subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke with pupils, looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with teachers and support staff. The lead inspector also heard pupils read to a familiar adult.
- The inspectors also met the science and PHSE subject leaders.
- The lead inspector held meetings with the local authority school improvement adviser. The lead inspector read recent notes of visit to the school from local authority advisers.
- The lead inspector met the chair of the newly appointed governing board. The lead inspector also met four other governors, including two parent governors.
- The inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including the school's own self-evaluation, school improvement plan and minutes of governors' meetings.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record, took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.
- The inspectors considered the responses gathered through Ofsted's online survey for parents, Ofsted Parent View, which included 113 free-text comments. There were 11 responses to the staff survey. 66 pupils answered the pupil survey. In addition, the inspectors spoke to several pupils from different year groups during the inspection, as well as a range of staff.

Inspection team

Sara Boyce, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Alison Hughes

Ofsted Inspector

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