

Springfields First School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124141
Local Authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	292901
Inspection date	14 May 2008
Reporting inspector	Frances Gillam

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	130
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Keith Lewis
Headteacher	Tracey Jackson
Date of previous school inspection	7 October 2002
School address	Yarnfield Stone ST15 0NJ
Telephone number	01785 760249
Fax number	01785 761674

Age group	3-9
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one Additional Inspector, who evaluated the overall effectiveness of the school and investigated the following issues: • the progress made by children in the Foundation Stage • the progress made by higher-attaining pupils in Years 1 and 2 in writing and by pupils in mathematics in Years 3 and 4 • the impact of leadership and management on driving improvements.

Description of the school

Almost all pupils who attend this smaller-than-average-sized first school are from White British backgrounds. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. The numbers of pupils who require additional support with their learning, have difficulties with their behaviour or have specific physical needs are much lower than in other schools.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

Springfields is an excellent school. It provides its pupils with a high quality of education. Pupils flourish and succeed in its caring environment. The comment made by one parent sums up the views held by many, that 'my children are very happy at school. I am sure that this is due to the warm and friendly nature of the staff. I know my children are safe and well cared for.' Children get off to an extremely good start in the Foundation Stage. This start provides a powerful springboard for pupils' subsequent learning. Children enter the Nursery with attainment above that expected for three-year-olds. From this starting point, pupils achieve very well. They make excellent progress and this enables them to reach standards that are much higher than those expected for their age by Year 4. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy develop exceptionally well and these provide a firm foundation for the pupils' future success.

Pupils say their lessons are fun and exciting. They say this is why they enjoy school so much and why they are so eager to attend. Pupils very much appreciate how teachers flavour their lessons with a touch of humour. For example, pupils in Year 4 thoroughly enjoyed using their mental mathematics skills to outwit the 'con man'. Pupils' attention was good and the pace of learning swift in this lesson. They worked hard to decide if they were getting a better deal by buying three items for the price of two or by buying one item with a third off the price. Challenges such as this inspire pupils and spur them on to work hard and achieve their best.

The headteacher, governors and staff have a very strong desire to ensure that pupils always do their best. Governors work successfully to support the school's work. They have a very good understanding of the school's effectiveness and they ask searching questions about its performance. This keeps senior managers and staff on their toes and ensures they stay sharply focused on priority areas. Senior managers make really good use of the information from teachers' assessments and the checks they make on pupils' progress to set challenging targets. Staff know exactly what is expected for each pupil and they devote their attention to ensuring they meet pupils' individual needs. These features, together with the excellent quality of teaching from the Nursery to Year 4, account for the rapid progress pupils make and the consistently high standards the school attains. Careful tracking of pupils' progress also enables senior managers to identify quickly any pupils in danger of falling behind. The prompt response and the very good support that these pupils receive enable them to get back on track and to do very well. For example, the school has tackled successfully the comparatively slower progress pupils in Years 3 and 4 made in mathematics compared with reading and writing. Greater challenge in activities and the strong focus on strengthening pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems have increased the rate of progress pupils now make. These features show the school has an excellent capacity to improve.

Promoting speaking and listening skills and strengthening pupils' understanding of letter sounds have been priority areas for school improvement. Efforts in these areas are proving successful. This is because staff are consistent in their approach to promoting discussion, and systematic in the way they teach pupils how to link letters with sounds. Promoting pupils' writing skills across other curriculum subjects is also a priority for the school. Although work to meet this priority is underway, sometimes the use of worksheets hampers pupils' further improvement. This is because some worksheets restrict the opportunities for pupils to record their ideas and findings in detail.

The school works very well with other local schools. Staff share ideas and develop strategies that enable them to improve the quality of teaching pupils receive. Video conferencing provides an excellent platform for pupils at Springfields to celebrate their achievements. Pupils spoke animatedly about how they had shared what they had learnt about the Romans with pupils in other schools. One commented, 'I don't think I will ever forget the fun we had and the things we learned.' Events such as these and the extensive range of clubs outside normal lessons enhance the excellent curriculum and contribute very well to pupils' enjoyment of school.

Parents are justified to feel that their children are very well cared for. Safeguarding procedures are robust and pupils are secure in the knowledge that adults will listen to them and respond to their needs. These features help the pupils to build strong and trusting relationships. These very positive relationships contribute successfully to the high levels of good behaviour. Pupils respond very well to the school's code of behaviour. This is because they fully understand the difference between right and wrong. Pupils respect the views of others because the school promotes their moral and social development very well and celebrates cultural diversity successfully. Pupils have a strong sense of their own and others' safety. They talked knowledgeably, for example, about the danger of too much exposure to the sun and the need to drink plenty of water on hot days. A good number of pupils make very good use of the sporting clubs on offer and make sensible choices about their diet. This is because they understand the importance of regular exercise and a balanced diet in keeping fit and healthy. Pupils make a very good contribution to their school and wider community. The school council is proactive in promoting healthy lifestyles and pupils enhance their environment by planting trees in the local vicinity. Pupils regularly raise funds for various charities because they say they want to help people less fortunate than they are.

Some parents are concerned that the school does not keep them informed of staff changes. The school does so within the bounds of confidentiality. Parents are also concerned that the school is not taking responsible action regarding cars parking at the school entrance. In this matter, the school is doing all it can to resolve the situation, including liaising with the police and local authority. It is disappointing that in spite of repeated requests, a small number of parents persist in parking at the school gates, putting their own and other parents' children in possible danger.

Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage

Grade: 1

Provision in the Nursery and Reception classes is extremely good. Parents of younger children stress the excellent start their children make. One parent echoes the views of others, 'I am impressed with the school's professionalism, especially the dedication, commitment and caring attitude within the Nursery.' A rich and vibrant curriculum in both classes provides children with an extensive range of exciting activities to discover and explore. Children are confident and eager to share their thoughts and ideas. This is because staff value their efforts and treat them fairly. These features build children's self-esteem and help them to feel happy and secure. Staff devise tasks that promote very good learning, ensuring that the tasks are matched closely to children's individual needs. This enables the children to build successfully on what they have done before and to make exceptionally good progress. Staff promote children's understanding of letter sounds very well. For example, children's excitement was high as they hunted and fished eagerly for letters and words in the 'treasure' and water trays. Children were engrossed and doubly pleased when they found the treasure and correctly identified the letters and words.

The focus on letter sounds supports the early stages of learning to read and write very successfully.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that teachers provide better opportunities for pupils to develop their writing across the curriculum.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	1
The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	1
The standards ¹ reached by learners	1
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	1
How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress	1

Personal development and well-being

How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of the learners' needs?	1
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

¹ Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Annex A

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	1
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	1
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	1
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can	1
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	1
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

15 May 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Springfields First School, Yarnfield ST15 0NJ

Thank you for making me so welcome when I visited your excellent school recently. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting you, visiting your classes and seeing all the exciting things you do.

The people in charge of your school and your teachers do an extremely good job. This helps you to reach standards that are much higher than those expected by Year 4 and to make outstanding progress in your work.

Here are some of the things I thought were extremely good about your school.

- You do very well at school. This is helping you to become very good readers, writers and mathematicians and it is preparing you very well for your future.
- You are very good at looking out for yourselves. You show care and consideration for others and you behave very well.
- You take plenty of exercise and make sensible choices about what you eat because you want to grow up fit and healthy.
- You really like school and you love a challenge. This spurs you on to work hard.
- You are keen to help those less fortunate than you are.
- You are very well cared for and you say you feel safe and happy in school.

I have asked the people in charge and your teachers to work together on one thing.

- To give you even more opportunities to develop your writing in different subjects.

Yours faithfully

Fran Gillam Lead inspector



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