

Speenhamland Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	109822
Local Authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	310111
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Reporting inspector	Wiola Hola HMI

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

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	276
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr John Bowness
Headteacher	Mrs Eleanor Brooks
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Pelican Lane Newbury RG14 1NU
Telephone number	01635 41077
Fax number	01635 551239

Age group	4–11
Inspection dates	10–11 February 2009
Inspection number	310111

© Crown copyright 2009

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the Education Act 2005, the school must provide a copy of this report free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Additional Inspector.

Description of the school

This primary school is larger than average. About 90% of pupils are from White British backgrounds and the rest are mostly from Other White or Mixed White and Asian backgrounds. The proportion of pupils with English as an additional language is similar to that in many schools, although very few pupils are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is broadly average. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is average but the proportion with statements of special educational needs is well above average. The school includes the Keevill Unit for pupils with physical difficulties and/or disabilities. This has 10 places but currently caters for 12 pupils.

Care for pupils before and after school is available in the Dragon Club, run by the school. The Pelican Nursery operates on the school's site but this is not managed by the school's governing body.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 4

In accordance with Section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that this school is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform. The school is therefore given a notice to improve. Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils' achievement, particularly over Years 3 to 6 but also elsewhere.

In this school, high-quality outcomes in some aspects of its work sit alongside some shortcomings. Leaders and managers are aware of these. While some pupils attain the academic standards of which they are capable, too many do not.

In 2007, too many pupils attained results in the Year 6 mathematics and science tests below what they were capable of achieving. Pupils' achievement in English was good. The school and the governors were dismayed by the poor performance. They identified causes for it, including some weaknesses in teaching and in systems for tracking pupils' progress which lacked rigour. The school has tackled these issues vigorously. This action improved performance in some elements of the 2008 Year 6 tests but overall results again reflected much underachievement. The school's efforts are now beginning to bear fruit. Teaching has improved and is satisfactory, but some inconsistencies remain. Consequently, pupils are now making satisfactory progress in lessons. However, there is not enough good teaching to overcome the legacy of underachievement. Hence, pupils' achievement over the time they have been in the school is inadequate. Standards are broadly average overall but should be higher, given pupils' starting points on joining the school.

The staff and parents are rightly proud of the way in which the school supports pupils' outstanding personal development. There is much to praise in the school's care and support for pupils which result in the pupils growing into confident, articulate, supportive and courteous young people. The way in which the school values each individual and seeks to include all pupils in school life is outstanding. The pupils with physical disabilities are fully integrated into mainstream lessons and supported via the Keevill Unit as appropriate. The school has a good range of support strategies and works very well with external agencies and this has helped to improve pupils' progress. Relationships are particularly strong throughout the school and also in the pre- and after-school Dragon Club, which is understandably much praised by parents. Pupils' enjoyment of school is outstanding and this is seen in their high attendance rates, their positive attitudes to each other and to learning and their excellent behaviour. Pupils' awareness of how to lead safe and healthy lives is excellent, as is their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school council is highly effective in giving pupils a voice. There are many ways in which pupils contribute to the life of the school and to the local and wider community.

The quality of lessons is satisfactory overall. Some are good but there are not yet enough good lessons to ensure that all pupils achieve their full potential. Lesson planning is generally sound but sometimes not enough attention is paid to checking how much pupils already know, to moving learning on at a good pace and to ensuring that the quantity as well as quality of work is at a high level. More can be expected from pupils in many lessons. The curriculum is satisfactory and includes some good elements. It is greatly enhanced by a wide range of enrichment activities that add enormously to pupils' experiences. Pupils and parents speak highly of these, particularly the many and varied sporting opportunities. Whereas support for pupils' personal development is of a very high quality, support for their academic development

has improved only to a satisfactory level. Systems for keeping a very close check on and for analysing pupils' progress are relatively new. They are not yet being fully used by leaders and managers at all levels, including subject leaders and year team leaders, to examine the progress of groups of pupils as well as individuals.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The steps being taken to improve the school are the right ones; some have already shown signs of a positive impact. In addition, governors are striving to improve the school's accommodation which is showing signs of age in many places, especially in the temporary huts which are uncomfortable to work in during hot or cold weather. In addition, space for information and communication technology (ICT) is very limited. Improvement since the last inspection has not been satisfactory. Previously reported strengths have been maintained, but standards and achievement have not risen in external tests.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

Improvements in the last year to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage have resulted in a pleasant environment for young children in which they feel welcome, stay safe and can enjoy their learning. The accommodation allows for a suitable and well-balanced range of indoor and outdoor activities, including ones that are adult-led and others that are freely chosen by the children. Children are making satisfactory progress in the required areas of learning, including personal development. The rate of children's progress has increased this year so that they are expected to reach the levels typically expected for their age by the end of the Reception year; this is an improvement from last year. There are several reasons for this, in addition to the improved accommodation, including the introduction of a thorough system for keeping a check on what skills and knowledge the children are acquiring and the improved planning of activities. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage is satisfactory. Children's welfare is attended to thoroughly. Staff are rightly seeking to make sure that the transition to Year 1 is as smooth as possible. They are strengthening curriculum links so that children are well prepared for their next steps in learning.

What the school should do to improve further

- Raise standards and achievement by increasing the proportion of good lessons and making sure that the work set is suitably challenging, completed at a good pace and of good quality and quantity.
- Develop further the skills of year team leaders and subject leaders so that they and the senior staff analyse the progress of groups of pupils, as well as individuals, more frequently and in greater depth, in order to improve provision as necessary.
- Improve the school's accommodation for ICT and in relation to the temporary huts currently used for some Year 5 and 6 pupils.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 4

Standards are broadly average. They have fluctuated in recent years and should be higher overall, given pupils' starting points. In the main, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve satisfactorily, as do some others, but too many pupils do not.

Achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and over Years 1 and 2 is generally satisfactory, as seen in recent test results and in current lessons, although not consistently so. Achievement over Years 3 to 6 has been very patchy in the last two years and is inadequate overall. It has varied greatly from class to class and from subject to subject. In 2007, the school recognised that progress in reading needed to be improved and successfully implemented strategies to deal with it, only to find that progress in writing slipped in 2008. It similarly identified a need to boost progress in mathematics and science in some classes and year groups. The provisional test results in Year 6 in 2008 showed that the proportions of pupils attaining higher than expected levels in English, mathematics and science were lower than they might have been, and considerably lower than in 2007. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are well developed. Skills in writing and numeracy, while generally satisfactory, are not as consistently well developed.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' personal development and well-being are a major strength of the school. Pupils clearly demonstrate their great enjoyment and appreciation of the opportunities provided to develop a range of skills. Many parents make positive comments about how much their children enjoy school. Excellent behaviour contributes to the calm and purposeful atmosphere throughout the school, characterised by mutual respect, cooperation and positive attitudes to learning.

Pupils say they feel safe in school and that the few incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly. The school's 'PM Pals' (peer mentoring pals) are very proud of their status in the school and enjoy being a 'listening ear' for other pupils. They take their responsibilities very seriously and are valued and respected. Pupils show an excellent understanding of how to live healthy and safe lives. Many eat healthy fruit and vegetable snacks at break-times. They engage enthusiastically in sporting activities in school time, in the Dragon Club and in competitive teams.

Pupils are attentive and articulate, and this enables many of them to play an active role in school life and beyond. They meet the very high expectations that the school has of them in listening to and presenting ideas. They hold the effective school council in high regard and enjoy the responsibility of contributing to the running of the school in many ways. Pupils are well prepared to be responsible citizens and to face their next stages in education confidently. They are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although the quality of lessons has been unsatisfactory in the recent past and some unevenness remains. This variability, together with the school's past shortcomings in keeping a very close watch on pupils' progress, has resulted in too many pupils not achieving as well as they could. The situation has improved and every teacher is very clear about the school's expectations of how much academic progress pupils should be making. Teachers are beginning to share these expectations with pupils. 'Learning Walls' in classrooms, for example, are helping pupils to understand their targets. Classrooms are bright, well organised and include many vibrant and interesting displays. Staff have created an inviting feel, even in the aging and now unsuitable temporary (1950s) huts. Relationships between pupils and

teachers are very strong, as reflected in the orderly and cordial conduct of lessons. Teaching assistants contribute well to pupils' learning.

Some good teaching exists, but there is not yet enough good teaching to enable pupils to make up swiftly for ground lost in previous years. Where teaching is good, teachers use skilful questioning to establish what pupils already know, and then move them on with good pace, providing a good range of tasks and often requiring pupils to speak to the class or to each other about their ideas. Weaker lessons are characterised by a slow pace and a level of challenge not well matched to pupils' needs. In some classes or subjects, the volume of work covered in half a year, as seen in pupils' written work, is too little.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 3

Strengths in provision for pupils' personal development are not yet matched by equal strengths in the provision for their academic development. Nevertheless, the curriculum is satisfactory and is being improved. Improvements made in the last year or so in the Early Years Foundation Stage, and for reading and mathematics, for example, have borne fruit. The school is rightly working on improving provision for more able pupils and for writing in particular. It is also seeking to increase the links between subjects so that pupils can use their literacy and other skills in context across the curriculum more frequently. Some good work on this already exists but more is needed.

The curriculum contributes greatly to pupils' personal development through the well-organised programme for personal, social and health education and in many other ways. A wide range of enrichment activities is offered. Current clubs include archery, cookery, cross-country, badminton, netball, football, choir and judo. All are very well attended. Residential visits to a local Tudor mansion and places of worship, and links with a local supermarket, for example, add interest to topics covered and broaden pupils' understanding of the local and wider community. Representatives of different faiths visit the school, supporting assemblies and work in class. Older pupils participate usefully in a Junior Citizen Project where they meet representatives of agencies that support all aspects of safety.

The Dragon Club offers high-quality care and learning opportunities for pupils. One parent, speaking for many others, explained: 'Speenhamland offers a fantastic pre- and after-school club - Dragon Club - which enables me to work and my daughter to be cared for.'

Resources for teaching and learning are generally adequate. Facilities for ICT are relatively limited, although teachers make good use of the interactive whiteboards. Time is mostly used well but some independent reading time at the start of the day is not used to full effect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

The support and care provided for pupils' personal needs and development is exemplary. The guidance for their academic development is not as strong but it is improving. Systems for ensuring child protection and health and safety are robust. Pupils' attendance is good, with effective procedures to promote this.

In this highly inclusive school, every effort is made to ensure that pupils are safe, happy and learn to respect each other and each other's differences. This is exemplified in the support provided in classes and in the Keevill Unit for pupils with physical difficulties/disabilities. There

are highly developed links with a local special school. These have been particularly effective for individual pupils who have emotional, social or behavioural needs, in providing specific high-quality individual support. A family support worker offers effective practical support for pupils who require social skills development and engages with families who need additional support. Thoughtful arrangements ensure that the transition to the local secondary schools occurs smoothly. The management of pupils' behaviour is highly successful and entirely unobtrusive. Success is recognised and praised.

With the improvements in the school's systems for keeping pupils' progress under review and in setting targets, staff are now in a position to provide at least adequate academic guidance to pupils. Marking, however, varies in its helpfulness.

Leadership and management

Grade: 3

Leaders and managers are undoubtedly successful in creating a highly inclusive and happy school. In the last year or so, an increased emphasis has been appropriately placed on ensuring increased rates of academic progress. While some success is visible, there is still more to do to secure consistently high-quality lessons and to improve the curriculum, so that pupils can all achieve their best.

Governors and senior leaders undertook a very thorough review of the school's work in September 2007 following disappointing test outcomes at the end of Year 6. The school has recognised that past shortcomings in provision and outcomes stem from a range of factors that include discontinuities in teaching, insufficiently robust systems for judging and promoting pupils' progress, and some lack of expertise among staff in using revised schemes of work and performance data. The current school improvement plan is addressing these issues. The school is working with a range of partners, including the local authority and some local schools, to share good practice, particularly in relation to increasing challenge in lessons and enhancing the skills of team and subject leaders. Records of pupils' attainment are kept well. The headteacher is skilled at using data to examine each pupil's progress, as well as the progress made class by class and subject by subject. She has clearly identified what elements need to be further improved.

Partnerships are very strong and supportive. They include those with external agencies, parents and staff in the main school and in the Keevill Unit. Staff in the Dragon Club are also employed in the main school as teachers or teaching assistants, and this helps with continuity for pupils. Play workers meet regularly to plan activities and show a high level of commitment to improving the provision further and to developing their own skills through further study.

Governors are rightly striving to improve the school's accommodation which is showing signs of age, is time-consuming to manage or difficult to use or be comfortable in. The limited space and facilities for ICT reduce opportunities for pupils to learn to use computers. The school is currently making appropriate use of its financial resources but, in view of pupils' past underachievement which has not yet been entirely rectified, the school cannot be said to be giving satisfactory value for money.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaints about school inspection', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Annex A

Inspection judgements

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

Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	4
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	No
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	3

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	3
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	3
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	3
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	3
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	3
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	3

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	4
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	4
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	3

¹Grade 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.

Personal development and well-being

How good are 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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	1
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	3
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	3
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	2

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	3
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	3
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	3
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	4
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3
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?	Yes

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

09 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Speenhamland Primary School, Newbury, RG14 1NU

Thank you for welcoming inspectors to your school recently. Your friendliness, politeness and confidence are impressive. It is very clear that you enjoy school greatly. Your parents also wrote much in praise of the school, the Keevill Unit and the Dragon Club. I write to let you know what we found during our visit.

The school has some great strengths but it is not good enough overall and needs to do some things better. It is successful in helping you to become mature, respectful young people. You work hard together and value the many opportunities provided to develop a wide range of skills. Staff make sure that you are secure and help you in understanding very well how to lead safe and healthy lives. The school works extremely well to support you, and your families where necessary, to deal with any personal difficulties. Those of you who are 'PM Pals' play a valuable part in making other pupils feel happy. The school council makes a strong contribution to the running of the school.

Academic standards in the school are similar to those found nationally on average but they should be better. Some of you make good progress but others do not, and progress has been too slow in some classes in the last few years. The headteacher, staff and governors are taking the right actions to make activities and lessons better. They have been successful in speeding up progress in reading, for example, but there is still more to do to make sure that you all do as well as possible in all subjects. Lessons are mostly satisfactory and some are good.

We have given the school a notice to improve and asked it to do three main things.

- Make sure that even more lessons are good so that your progress is speeded up and standards rise. Teachers should give you work that is suitably hard for you and check that it is done at a good pace and is of good quality and quantity.
- Help teachers make accurate judgements about how well you are learning so that they know exactly what work to set you next.
- Improve some learning spaces, particularly those currently used by two of the Year 5/6 classes and also for ICT.

You can help to make the school even better by continuing to work hard and telling teachers if the work you are given is too difficult or too easy.

I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours faithfully

Wiola Hola

Her Majesty's Inspector