

# Spellbrook Primary School

## Inspection report

---

|                                |                |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Unique Reference Number</b> | 117405         |
| <b>Local Authority</b>         | Hertfordshire  |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 312603         |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>        | 15–16 May 2008 |
| <b>Reporting inspector</b>     | Robert Drew    |

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

---

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Type of school</b>                     | Primary  |
| <b>School category</b>                    | Voluntary controlled   |
| <b>Age range of pupils</b>                | 3–11   |
| <b>Gender of pupils</b>                   | Mixed  |
| <b>Number on roll</b>                     |  |
| School                                    | 70   |
| <b>Appropriate authority</b>              | The governing body   |
| <b>Chair</b>                              | Ms Natalie Chalcraft   |
| <b>Headteacher</b>                        | Mr Mathew Land   |
| <b>Date of previous school inspection</b> | 23 June 2003   |
| <b>School address</b>                     | London Road<br>Spellbrook<br>Bishop's Stortford<br>Hertfordshire<br>CM23 4BA |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                   | 01279723204  |
| <b>Fax number</b>                         | 01279726508  |

---

|                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Age group</b>         | 3–11           |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>  | 15–16 May 2008 |
| <b>Inspection number</b> | 312603         |

---

© Crown copyright 2008

Website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 an Additional Inspector.

## Description of the school

The school is much smaller than average. It serves pupils from the village of Spellbrook and its surrounding area. The great majority are White British, with about 20% coming from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds. On balance, pupils' backgrounds are economically advantaged, and attainment on entry is average. More pupils than usual have learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The headteacher is in his first year at the school.

## Key for inspection grades

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

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school. It is run well and pupils enjoy attending. Parents rightly support the school strongly. One summed up the general view by saying they 'could not wish for a better, safer school, in which children come first.'

The dynamic leadership is good and management efficient and, as a result, standards are good and the capacity for further improvement is excellent. New management arrangements are increasingly successful and self-evaluation is very accurate, providing a reliable basis for future action. Value for money is good.

Pupils' achievement is good. Standards are above average and rising. An existing upward trend in Key Stage 2 has been strengthened by a similar pattern in Key Stage 1. Recent action has improved tracking, giving pupils and their teachers a clearer picture of what to aim for. This has had an immediate impact on writing and reading standards in Key Stage 1, which have also benefited from the policy of teaching Year 2 pupils with older children for part of each day. Underpinning all improvements are the rising quality of teaching and the increasingly impressive attitudes of pupils.

Teaching and learning are consistently good. Relationships in the classroom are excellent, pupils are keen to learn and good at listening. In the past, they were less confident at participating actively, but this feature is beginning to improve. Teachers are particularly clear in their explanations. They use assessment well. All tasks focus on aims that pupils and their teachers understand and have agreed. Marking is consistent in helping pupils see how to improve. The pace of learning is good.

Pupils respond well to staff both in lessons and around school, so that their overall personal development is good. Their behaviour is excellent, they are consistently polite, pleasant and often act in a very mature manner. Many are effective helpers in other classes and at lunch times. Pupils' awareness of how to live healthily and safely is good, as is their contribution to others in the community, with this aspect improving further, especially through the work of the newly formed school council. In some instances, such as assemblies led entirely by pupils, independence and confidence are already excellent. Preparation for the next stage of education is good. Enjoyment of school is good overall and for the many high-attending pupils it is excellent. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is good overall, with the spiritual dimension being particularly effective, stemming from regular experience of worship and pupils' highly reflective attitudes. However, the curriculum places adequate rather than good emphasis on knowledge of the numerous cultures that have a prominent place in modern Britain. Absences amongst a minority of pupils are persistent, hindering their continuity of learning. Current strategies for raising attendance are only partly successful.

The curriculum promotes most other aspects of learning well. Pupils enjoy their topics and receive a wide range of stimulating experiences in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Visits enrich the school's work significantly. Information and communication technology (ICT) provision is satisfactory, its development has lagged behind that of other subjects because of technical weaknesses. Care, guidance and support are good. Tracking arrangements are new but already effective. Pastoral care is good, staff attitudes are excellent and support systems are very effective. The encouragement of independence in pupils is a new focus and has begun to change their approach.

Good links exist with the wider community, especially with the local parent church which makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

## **Effectiveness of the Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

This is good because it is well organised and features good liaison with parents. Indoor and outdoor spaces are extensive and attractively set out. Children are very happy and show confidence in choosing their own activities or responding to guidance from staff. Essential skills are reinforced in all activities. For instance, writing 'charge sheets' for each other at the pretend police station after speeding and other offences combine the use of literacy skills with a great deal of fun.

Record keeping identifies initial strengths and weaknesses effectively. Children generally start with below average scores for their grasp of 'sounds and letters' and 'communication, language and literacy'. Good progress is made in Nursery and Reception, because both classes have good teaching and there is very close cooperation between staff in teaching, planning and monitoring. As a result, children achieve well and reach the expected goals by the time they move into Year 1.

## **What the school should do to improve further**

- Increase the participation of pupils in lessons, to raise their confidence in speaking and listening and clarify what they understand or need to learn.
- Ensure ICT hardware and systems work reliably and no longer hinder progress in lessons.
- Take new steps to raise attendance levels.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Good progress in the Foundation Stage is built on in Key Stage 1 so that standards are above average in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 2. Previously less successful aspects of Key Stage 1 performance have been rectified and the higher levels are now being reached in writing and reading. At Key Stage 2, an improving trend has been intensified recently by more effective teaching, assessment and tracking. Standards by the end of Year 6 are above average and rising, ensuring that achievement between entering and leaving the school is good and improving. Pupils who find learning difficult make good progress. Standards in foundation subjects generally match those in the core, but in ICT they are broadly average and improvement is hindered by the unreliability of hardware and systems.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

This is good overall, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils have a good awareness of how to be healthy and safe. They contribute well to their community, especially through the imaginative work of the school council, and are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Some aspects of their development are excellent and others satisfactory; for instance, behaviour is outstanding and pupils are extremely polite and reliable. They have an excellent spiritual dimension. For many, enjoyment is also excellent. Attendance is slightly below average, with a minority being persistently absent for occasional days. Cultural awareness is satisfactory but lags behind other aspects of development.

## Quality of provision

### Teaching and learning

#### Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good because staff have established excellent relationships with pupils and have high expectations. Explanations and guidance in lessons are very clear and assessment is used well. A key reason for rising standards has been the introduction of well-defined aims for each lesson, which are agreed between staff and pupils and used extensively by both. Along with helpful day-to-day marking, they give pupils a very clear picture of how to improve. The practical involvement of pupils' participation in lessons is sometimes good, but the school's focus on this feature is relatively new. Opportunities to speak to the class, discuss with each other in pairs or work independently are present but underused.

### Curriculum and other activities

#### Grade: 2

This aspect is good overall. The curriculum is being rewritten so that skills are made more prominent and better linked. Where this has been completed, there is very effective reinforcement of learning and clear routes through progressively more demanding work. Already, the curriculum provides well for the full ability and age ranges in each class. Enrichment through extra-curricular activities is good, but the school is right to see scope for even greater use of the school grounds and more emphasis on a variety of cultures.

### Care, guidance and support

#### Grade: 2

The quality of provision is good and is reflected in pupils' good personal development. Staff have very caring attitudes and underpin these with effective policies. They are very consistent in rewarding good behaviour and applying sanctions when required. All statutory requirements are fully met for safeguarding pupils. Strategies for raising attendance levels have had some impact, but not enough. Tracking academic progress is done well and is having a major impact on improved standards and progress.

## Leadership and management

#### Grade: 2

The school has good leadership and management. The headteacher provides excellent vision, sense of direction and ambition for the school. His early impact on expectations and morale is striking. Staff have adopted new responsibilities and several new policies. Collectively these now lead to good progress and effective personal development amongst pupils. Governors contribute well, having acquired a closer working relationship with staff and benefited from training. Their monitoring role is expanding. Other staff with leadership roles are already effective and growing in expertise and confidence. They have established a whole-school view of curriculum, assessment and teaching needs, for instance, and show a clear awareness of accountability in each area. They also liaise well together. The capacity for further improvement is now excellent.

**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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).**

## 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? | 2   |
| 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?   | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the Foundation Stage   | 2   |
| The capacity to make any necessary improvements   | 1   |

### Achievement and standards

|  |   |
|--|---|
| How well do learners achieve?  | 2 |
| The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners   | 2 |
| How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners | 2 |
| How well learners with learning difficulties and disabilities make progress                              | 2 |

### Personal development and well-being

|   |   |
|---|---|
| How good is the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?                                  | 2 |
| The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                                     | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles   | 2 |
| The extent to which learners adopt safe practices   | 2 |
| How well learners enjoy their education   | 2 |
| The attendance of learners  | 3 |
| 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 the learners' needs?          | 2 |
| How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners? | 2 |
| How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?   | 2 |

<sup>1</sup> 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**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>                                       | 2   |
| 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  | 2   |
| The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation  | 2   |
| How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination tackled so that all learners achieve as well as they can                     | 2   |
| How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money  | 2   |
| The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities  | 2   |
| 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

19 May 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Spellbrook Primary School, Bishops Stortford, CM23 4BA

Thank you for your welcome last week. I enjoyed seeing the school and you are fortunate to be in one that is already good, and still improving. You and your parents are right to be pleased with the school because many things it does are working well.

- Standards are above average and rising.
- You make good progress.
- Teaching is good.
- Your behaviour is excellent.
- The school is well managed.
- The headteacher leads the school extremely well.

The school could improve further by finding ways of:

- involving you even more fully in lessons, so you get every opportunity to speak out, listen to each other and discuss things
- making sure all ICT equipment is reliable
- reducing the frequent absences which interrupt learning for a few of you.

You can help by coming to school every day and continuing to work hard. Best wishes for the rest of your time at Spellbrook.

Yours sincerely

Robert Drew

Lead inspector