

Springfield Infant School and Nursery

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	124658
Local Authority	Suffolk
Inspection number	315007
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Reporting inspector	Jill Bavin

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	Infant
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–7
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	248
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	46
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Vivian Aldous
Headteacher	Mrs Rosie Hill
Date of previous school inspection	9 May 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	11 Wesley Way Ipswich Suffolk IP1 4PP

Age group	3–7
Inspection dates	6–7 November 2008
Inspection number	315007

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

This is a larger-than-average infant school with a nursery offering morning and afternoon sessions. Children start in the nursery at the beginning of the term when they are four. They join the Reception class at the start of the term in which they have their fifth birthday. This means that some children have only one term in the Reception class. An external provider offering an after-school club for children from Springfield Infants and other local schools meets in the school building. The school supports several children from more than one refuge and has done for many years. In other respects, the school population has changed over recent years. Although most children are of White British heritage, the school has become more ethnically diverse and the percentage learning English as an additional language has doubled since the previous inspection. The number of children with additional learning needs has grown over recent years and currently accounts for a third of children. There is a slightly higher percentage with statements of special educational needs than the national average. There is a higher-than-average proportion of children eligible for free school meals. Forty per cent of teachers and fifty per cent of governors have joined the school during the last two years.

The school has gained several accolades, including an Active Mark in 2007, Gold Artsmark in 2006 and, more recently, the status of a Centre of Excellence for the Suffolk Empty Numberline Programme.

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 and improving school, much appreciated by parents. Some aspects of its work are outstanding. These include excellent leadership and management, the extremely high quality of care that children receive and the school's outstanding links with other professionals, organisations and parents. These aspects clearly contribute to the school having halted and reversed a decline in standards. In spite of more children arriving in school with greater levels of learning difficulties, standards are rising and all groups of children achieve well. Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school's leadership. Comments such as: 'the school has always wanted to work in partnership in order to support my son'; 'he has blossomed'; 'I can speak to staff if any problems arise'; and 'I enjoy my child's school; topics are varied and she enjoys lessons', reflect the views of many.

Girls and boys at different ability levels make good progress from their various starting points. There are examples of individual children making exceptional progress, both academically and socially. Consequently, by the end of Year 2 in 2008, standards were broadly average in writing and reading and above average in science, although they were below in mathematics. The school's systems for recording and checking each child's progress are exemplary. This information indicates extremely clearly that children currently in Year 2 are on track to reach even higher standards in 2009, with strengths in science sustained and all other areas improving further. They are on track to reach average standards in mathematics. Children with significant learning needs make equally good progress, often from very low starting points. In instances of exceptional progress, children who join the school with significant difficulties reach higher than expected levels of attainment before they leave. Since the previous inspection the school has made outstanding progress in developing its systems for checking how well children are doing and providing children with feedback. These improvements indicate that the school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

Teaching and learning are good. A key feature is the common approach shared among teachers and between teachers and teaching assistants, which helps children to feel secure and understand what is expected of them. All staff set a very good example of how to behave and they manage behaviour consistently, positively and effectively. Although teaching is good overall and occasionally outstanding, opportunities for children to learn independently are inconsistent. Planned opportunities for children to work independently are not given the same emphasis as other activities. The curriculum is good because there are good links between subjects that enrich children's learning and a good range of special programmes to meet the needs of different groups of children.

The headteacher's outstanding leadership means that in spite of staff and governor changes and an increasingly complex mix of children with varied needs, the school's teamwork is excellent. This enables the school to provide extremely high quality care. Consequently, children make outstanding progress in their personal development. They have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy, and the vast majority clearly enjoy school immensely. When they are given responsibility they make a good contribution to the school community and they take commendable and justifiable pride in their work.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children get off to a good start in the nursery and reception classes. They make good progress in all areas of learning and very good progress in their readiness to learn and socialise. This is because the team of teachers, nursery nurse and teaching assistants have a good understanding of children's needs. Children enjoy positive and secure relationships with adults. The new 'key worker' system of allocating an adult to a small group of children supports their learning and their welfare well. Teachers plan lessons well to take account of children's needs and focus on key communication and mathematical skills. These strengths in relationships, care and teaching account for the good progress that children make. Having achieved well most children join Year 1 close to expected standards, although still below in some key areas.

Activities provided for children are suitable for their age and good use is made of the outdoor learning environment for the nursery children. Not all activities for children in the reception classes are equally exciting, stimulating and attractive to them. This means that their choice for independent work is limited and can lead to one popular activity becoming overcrowded. The school has improved its outdoor facilities for children in the reception classes since the previous inspection but this is very recent and children do not yet use the space fully.

Good leadership and management of the provision ensure a good level of teamwork among staff. This contributes to happy children, feeling secure and learning well. Precise, detailed and accurate information about how well each child is doing and what they need to do next inform teachers' planning. Exceptionally thorough analysis of this information demonstrates clearly that those children who spend the longest time in the EYFS do best.

What the school should do to improve further

- Provide children with more opportunities to learn independently across the whole school.
- Ensure that the EYFS provision offers a more stimulating and exciting curriculum, including the outdoor learning environment for Reception Class children.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Children achieve well and make good progress from starting points well below those usually encountered. They make outstanding progress in science because of the extent to which practical activities are included in a wide variety of topics. Progress in reading and writing is good overall but stronger in writing, reflecting the school's recent focus. In 2008, children's standards in mathematics were below average but they had made satisfactory progress. Children in Year 2 are on track to reach average standards in mathematics having made good progress. Over time there has been a steady increase in the percentage of children reaching higher levels of attainment. This percentage was higher in 2008 than in 2007 and the school is on track to increase this group further in 2009. The school makes good provision for different groups of children on a daily basis. It also provides special programmes to meet particular needs for small groups, including those who find learning relatively easy. This intervention arises from an exceptionally thorough analysis of records that track each child's progress.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Children's personal development and well-being are good. Because adults are unfailingly positive, supportive and understanding in helping children to conform and co-operate, children become increasingly focused and willing to learn. Behaviour is good but a significant minority remain dependent on skilful adult support in order to maintain their good behaviour. There are several examples of individual success stories of children with potentially challenging behaviour who become increasingly able to exert self-control. The successes in this area contribute to children's outstanding enjoyment of school. Attendance for the vast majority is good but children from a very small group of families' record too many absences; this depresses overall attendance figures and damages the education of the children concerned.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Children have a secure understanding of right and wrong. They are confident in reminding each other of school rules, such as walking on the left, and in turning to an adult for help if they have a concern. They are beginning to develop an understanding of wider citizenship issues through re-cycling projects. Growing potatoes encourages a sense of wonder at the natural world. They have a good understanding of choices available to them to stay safe and healthy and are receptive to new experiences, including cultural ideas beyond their own. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teachers are consistently good at sharing learning intentions with children. As a result, children have a good understanding of the context for their learning. Marking is good, and children both understand and appreciate the help they receive from adults. Most lessons successfully modify tasks and expectations for children with different needs, which accounts for all groups of children making equally good progress. Children learn best when activities are practical and relevant to them, such as buying and selling from each other in mathematics, or when the subject, such as space aliens, captures their imaginations in literacy. However, children do not always have sufficient time to learn through their own experience or to pursue their own ideas. They have asked the school for more opportunities to work in small groups with each other. Teaching assistants make an invaluable contribution, particularly in supporting those who find learning difficult. They do this very successfully.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

Activities are well planned to focus on key skills within the context of suitable topics, such as 'space'. It is to the school's credit that children have a good understanding of what different subjects, such as geography and history entail while learning through topics and themes. Nevertheless, opportunities for children to learn independently are not consistently planned for, anticipated or exploited as they arise. There are plenty of opportunities for children to express themselves through the arts, and they clearly love singing, which they do well. The programme of visits and visitors enriches children's learning by extending their experience. For example, a visit to the expanse of Alton Water elicits wonder and amazement. Resources for

information and communication technology (ICT) have improved significantly since the previous inspection. They now enhance learning opportunities in all subjects. Recent developments in increasing links between subjects and very recent programmes for the most able children are helping to raise standards, but it is too soon for them to have had a full effect.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Children receive outstanding support in this school. Very effective target setting and strong relationships between staff and children mean that children have a very secure understanding of how to improve their work. The school has exceptionally strong and effective links with parents, other professionals, other settings, schools and organisations. Consequently, they prepare their learning environment extremely thoroughly and conscientiously in order to meet the wide spread of needs that different children bring to the school. Procedures to keep children safe are robust. Children feel extremely safe and secure in school. They report that 'problems always get sorted out'. They rate the school highly and know that adults have their best interests at heart.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

Excellent care, good academic achievement and children's good personal development arise from outstanding leadership and management at all levels. The headteacher's support from her deputy, senior managers and the new chair of governors is highly effective. They are skilfully and successfully steering the school through a period of considerable change. Exceptionally secure systems for monitoring and evaluating its work and its impact on children have helped staff undertaking new roles to do so with an impressively rapid understanding of what needs to be done. Governors have a good understanding of the challenges facing the school and share with staff a good understanding of the needs of the local community. The school enjoys excellent partnerships with a wide range of services and families, which contribute to the exceptional quality of care. The headteacher has a highly inclusive approach and successfully inspires a commitment to welcoming all children and families, to raising standards and to forging greater links with the business community. This high quality leadership has developed steadily over time while the school has experienced changes in its children, staff and governors. Hence, its impact is yet to be fully apparent in all aspects of the school's work.

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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?	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?	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

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?	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
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
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?	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?	1

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 eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	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

Annex B

Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection

10 November 2008

Dear Children

Inspection of Springfield Infant and Nursery School, Ipswich, IP1 4PP

I am writing to thank you for all the help you gave us when we visited your school recently. We enjoyed meeting you and hearing your ideas about the school. A special thank you goes to the children who met Mr Parry at lunchtime and showed him some of their work. We agree with you and your parents that you go to a good school.

You told us that you like school a lot. Someone wanted to give the school 100 out of 100 for being so good. We could see how much you enjoy school because of the way you get involved in lessons and assemblies. You work hard and you make good progress. You make brilliant progress in science. We were very pleased with how well you knew your literacy and mathematics targets. We enjoyed hearing you sing in assembly. You behave well in lessons and around school and take good care of each other.

You know that adults in school care about you very much and you feel safe in school. The headteacher and teachers keep excellent records about how well each of you is doing and they use these to decide how best to help you. All the adults in school are very good at sharing ideas about how to make your school even better. They told us that you have asked for more chances to work together in small groups. We have asked them to give you more time to work out your own ideas with each other or on your own. We have also asked the teachers to make sure that the children in the nursery and reception classes have more really interesting things to do.

Thank you once again for being so friendly and helpful. We hope you always enjoy learning so much.

Jill Bavin

Lead inspector