

Spring Park Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	131464
Local Authority	Croydon
Inspection number	328594
Inspection dates	27–28 January 2009
Reporting inspector	Wendy Simmons

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	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	360
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	46
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Eric Nash
Headteacher	Mrs Sue Hine
Date of previous school inspection	1 November 2007
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Bridle Road Shirley Croydon CR0 8HQ
Telephone number	020 8777 2808
Fax number	020 8777 4880

Age group	3–11
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by three Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

Spring Park is a large school. At the time of the last inspection it was given a Notice to Improve. This was because the school was not giving its pupils an effective enough education. In particular, weaknesses were identified in leadership; teaching and learning; attendance; and the quality of provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Spring Park educates pupils from a very wide range of cultural backgrounds. Just over one third of all pupils come from White British backgrounds. Other large groups include pupils from Asian, Black African and mixed heritages. A high proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language. Many pupils come from troubled home backgrounds, and close to one half of all pupils receive free school meals. The number of pupils who join and leave the school throughout the school year is much higher than usual. A much higher than average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and these relate mostly to moderate learning difficulty, or to the areas of language and communication, or behavioural and emotional difficulties. The school has a Nursery and two Reception classes; these form the Early Years Foundation Stage. The current headteacher joined the school in the spring of 2008.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 3

Under the very strong and energetic leadership of the headteacher, the school has improved well since the last inspection. Therefore, in accordance with section 13(5) of the Education Act 2005, HMCI is of the opinion that the school no longer requires significant improvement, as it is providing a satisfactory education for its pupils.

Many aspects of the school's work are now good, and pupils are supported by caring staff who want them to do well. As one parent put it, 'The school has come on leaps and bounds this year' and the inspectors agree. The headteacher said that when she arrived, 'The school had no heart'. The change is immense. The environment is attractive and welcoming, and there is a sense of purpose in all that the staff do; teamwork is now good.

Notably, the quality of leadership at all levels has improved from being inadequate to become good, and it is this that is driving all aspects of this quickly improving school. Over the last year, the quality of teaching and learning has improved to satisfactory, and this has resulted in pupils' better progress. In some classes teaching is good, and it is occasionally outstanding. However, there is not enough consistently good teaching to ensure that pupils' achievement is better than satisfactory. Leaders are working hard to share good practice between staff, but know that there is still more to do to make teaching and learning good overall.

Pupils are doing well in catching up with learning that should have been done in the past. This is aided by effective systems to check their progress and to provide specific support and guidance for those who need extra help to do as well as they should. The good pastoral care, when combined with the improved teaching, helps pupils to achieve satisfactorily, whatever their background or need. In particular, pupils learning English as an additional language achieve well due to the good emphasis on widening and enriching their speaking skills.

In the last year, standards have risen throughout the school. As a result, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level by the end of Year 6 is broadly average. The school has lifted standards in English especially well, as they had been exceptionally low prior to 2008. Inspectors' analysis of the school's assessment data and pupils' work indicates that this improvement in standards is being sustained. Reading is improving well, but there is still more to do to ensure that more pupils reach the higher levels in their writing. Standards are beginning to rise in writing, but pupils do not have enough opportunities to edit, extend and improve their individual pieces of work. Leaders have already grasped the importance of this and are training staff in how to help pupils improve their writing; there is still more to do.

The quality of pupils' personal development and of the curriculum has improved from satisfactory to good. Pupils thoroughly enjoy being at school, as evidenced by their improved attendance. Pupils behave well and develop a strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They recognise and value the changes that have been made. Many make a good contribution to the community and show a pride in what they do. They know about how to be healthy and safe, and are being helped to gain a suitable range of skills for their future lives.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 3

The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved markedly since the last inspection. Staff's expertise has been strengthened, and they have a suitable knowledge of how to help young children to learn in different ways. Adults are caring and show considerable

respect for the children. The good, and greatly improved, partnership with parents enhances this. As a result, children develop confidence and settle quickly into school. Children form good relationships with the adults. Leaders are working towards allocating a 'key person' to every child, so that they can each form an even closer bond with a particular adult on a day-to-day basis.

Planning has improved in the last six months, and the learning environment is more attractive and better organised. Group work is usually well organised, with challenging and interesting activities. Children enjoy and benefit from regular opportunities to initiate their own learning, exploring things for themselves. The well-designed new outside learning area enhances children's skills and enjoyment.

Until July of 2008, standards reached by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage were very low, and children had not made enough progress. Improvements in teaching and learning since June 2008 are resulting in rising standards. The school's assessment information shows that standards are on track to be closer to the expected level at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2009. From children's often low starting point, especially in speaking English, they make steady overall progress in the Nursery and Reception classes, when all six areas of learning are considered. In particular, they make good progress in acquiring new words and gaining the confidence to talk about what they are doing.

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. There are strengths in the way that adults support and encourage children to talk about what they are doing. They promote children's personal development well. As a result, children develop their ability to communicate and work cooperatively with each other. Children's progress is carefully checked, and activities are planned to meet children's specific needs. As a result, children are making at least steady and sometimes good progress. The inspection team agrees with leaders' views that children need more opportunities for writing, and to do simple mathematical problem solving. The effective teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) helps children with their reading. Children enjoy role play, but there are not enough dressing up clothes to stimulate their imaginations to the best effect.

What the school should do to improve further

- Ensure that more lessons are good and outstanding.
- Lift standards further in writing, especially by providing pupils with more opportunities to edit, extend and improve their work.

A small proportion of the schools whose overall effectiveness is judged satisfactory, but which have areas of underperformance, will receive a monitoring visit by an Ofsted inspector before their next section 5 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 3

At the time of the last inspection, pupils' achievement was found to be inadequate and standards of work were not high enough. This was especially so in pupils' English skills. In 2008, standards rose to be broadly average by the end of Year 2 and Year 6. The pupils are now making more even progress as they move through the school. Overall, most pupils gain the expected level in their work, but fewer reach the higher levels by Year 2 and Year 6. In the last year there has been impressive progress in pupils' reading skills, but more remains to be done to improve writing. Leaders and teachers have focused on helping boys, especially those from White British backgrounds, to do better. This was an important initiative, as there had been a big gap between

how well boys did when compared with girls. As a result of changes to the curriculum, boys and girls are both enjoying learning more, and they are often highly motivated, as was evident in their reading and writing about The Iron Man. Leaders are successfully reducing the gap in performance. Overall, achievement is satisfactory, and for pupils learning English as an additional language it is good. This is because teachers place a good emphasis on helping pupils to increase their vocabulary and to use new words in longer sentences.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 2

Pupils behave well and are polite, enthusiastic and proud of their achievements. They say that staff make them feel part of the community. As one commented, 'We have more opportunities to join in and take responsibility.' Pupils have a good understanding of different religions and cultures, which helps them to show respect for others and enhances community cohesion. For example, pupils talk about the nature of God and explain clearly about the Jewish faith. Pupils agree that there is a high degree of racial harmony, and almost all parents agree. Good links with the wider community aid pupils' understanding of the world. Pupils' artwork is impressive and contributes much to their spiritual and cultural development.

Pupils enjoy sports, and they also enjoy doing fitness activities. For example, younger pupils take part in a 15-minute 'Activate' exercise programme every day. Pupils also enjoy such things as lacrosse, dance and football. Pupils grow their own vegetables, and are in the process of making a sensory garden. The school is keenly working to regain a Healthy School Award. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their improved attendance, and in their love of visits and doing things in the wider community. Pupils work closely with senior citizens, and help out at the neighbourhood coffee drop-in group. A special citizenship day has helped pupils to have a good understanding about how to be safe in the wider world.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 3

Pupils have noticed the difference in the teaching in the school; as several said, 'we are getting on better now'. Teachers make sure that pupils understand what they are learning about, and they almost always plan their lessons carefully. Teachers are enthusiastically developing their knowledge and skills so that their pupils can learn in different ways. They place a strong emphasis on discussion work, which helps pupils to understand new things and to speak with greater accuracy and clarity. Staff manage pupils' behaviour well and have good relationships with them. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is not as quick as it could be. Occasionally, teachers keep pupils on the carpet for too long, which limits time for individual and group work. Teachers often mark pupils' work well and suggest how they can improve their work. However, pupils are not given enough time to act on the comments, and this hampers progress, especially in writing. For example, in Year 2, pupils made an exciting list of winter words for a poem, but did not then use them to actually write their own poems. Some teachers give especially lively, interesting and challenging activities for pupils, and this often leads to good and outstanding lessons. As yet, there are not enough good or better lessons, and this is an important area for development.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The good range of visits and activities helps pupils to understand and learn about many new things. For example, a visit by a theatre group aided young children's learning about the Great Fire of London. The school places a strong focus on arts and music, and provides a good range of extra-curricular clubs. The provision for pupils to learn basic skills has been improved considerably. There is a strong focus on learning letters and sounds (phonics), and this is helping pupils with their reading and spelling. The introduction of 'Rapid Reading' and 'Boys into Books' activities encourages pupils to read. Inspectors noticed pupils beaming with delight when they accurately read their books. The school is making sure that pupils have a secure understanding of mathematics, and teachers are well on the way with developing real-life problem solving in mathematics and science, although this is stronger in some classes than others. The needs of pupils who are learning English as an additional language are well catered for, and as a result they often make good progress. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on social, moral and physical development. Pets' corner provides a delightful setting for pupils to explore their emotions and learn how to care for animals. Pupils' good links with other schools in Britain and abroad contribute well to their understanding of different cultures and lifestyles, which aids community cohesion well.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Teachers are caring, and want the pupils to have high aspirations and succeed. They have developed clear systems to track pupils' progress, and staff know the pupils well. These are important factors in why pupils are now doing better than they did. The school has introduced a good range of extra support group activities to help pupils to make faster progress in their learning. The support for pupils with learning difficulties has also improved. As one pupil noted, 'I had behaviour problems and I have been helped. I am good enough to become a mentor' (mentors help others to find ways to overcome their worries, anger and frustration, especially at playtime). Pupils know their targets, and teachers make sure that they are given good guidance about how to improve their learning. The very few incidences of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively. Pupils are confident that they will be resolved quickly, because the school has good systems in place to support them. The school has good links with outside agencies to enhance the care, guidance and support given to pupils and their families. The school will shortly be opening a Children's Centre to widen the care still further.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

The headteacher said, 'I want to make a difference', and she has. She has skilfully led the school and its staff through a difficult time. Her energetic and professional leadership has raised staff skills, pupils' aspiration, and the quality of the work of the school as a whole. She has created a common sense of purpose among staff, and almost all parents express confidence in the work of the school.

Leaders have worked hard and successfully to promote good community cohesion. For example, they are actively involved in promoting multicultural events. Also, they have been working closely with the housing department to ensure that families are given the opportunity to stay

in the immediate area when they need rehousing. This is aiding the way in which family groups make friends, support each other, and work with the school for the benefit of their children. Exciting plans are well under way to open a Children's Centre to further aid support, skills and community cohesion.

In the past, many managers were not clear about their roles and felt overwhelmed. This is no longer the case. Managers at all levels understand what the school needs to do to improve, because they have been empowered by the headteacher to take responsibility for standards and achievement in their subjects and areas of responsibility. Leaders carefully check teachers' lessons, pupils' progress, and standards. They use this information to set challenging and realistic targets. There are good plans in place to develop the school. All areas of the school's work have improved since the last inspection. This reflects why the school has a good capacity to develop still further.

The headteacher has helped governors to develop their role, so that their financial decisions are linked directly to improving teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. Governors have taken firm action to eradicate past staffing problems, and they now ask more challenging questions about the work of the school. They play a central role in development planning and, like all leaders, are proud of the school.

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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?	3
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 capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

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?	2
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?	3
The standards ¹ reached by learners	3
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	3
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?	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	2
The attendance of learners	3
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	3

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?	2
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?	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
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 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	3
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**

11 February 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Spring Park Primary School, Croydon, CR0 8HQ

You may remember that three inspectors came to your school recently. Thank you for being so friendly and telling us about your school. I am writing to let you know what we found.

Your school is satisfactory and has got much better in the last year. This is because of the following things.

- Your headteacher is doing a great job and the other adults are helping her.
- The teaching is better, and you have also noticed this.
- You like your teachers and enjoy your lessons
- There are more visits and extra activities, and these help you with your learning.
- You especially like being more involved in school life, and we agree that this is a good thing.
- Most of you are now able to do the things that we expect in English, mathematics and science.
- You make steady progress overall, so well done for working hard!
- Your headteacher and other adults do a good job in looking after you.

The inspectors really liked your behaviour and were very pleased to hear that you enjoy coming to school. Well done for improving your attendance - please keep this up! We were very impressed by how you are trying to become fit and healthy, and we liked the way that you are kind to others. We loved the art work and enjoyed hearing you sing so nicely. We were impressed by your work as mentors, and were delighted that you are enjoying looking after the pets so well.

Your headteacher and the other adults are keen to try to do the best they can for you. We want to help them, and we have asked them to do the following things:

- make sure that more of your lessons are good
- give you more time to go back over your writing, so that you can work on the ideas that your teachers give you to improve your skills.

Yours faithfully

Wendy Simmons

Lead Inspector