

The Spinney Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	110765
Local Authority	Cambridgeshire
Inspection number	325214
Inspection dates	11–12 December 2008
Reporting inspector	Keith Sadler

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)	208
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	Mrs Frances Amrani
Headteacher	Mrs Rachel Snape
Date of previous school inspection	22 September 2005
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Hayster Drive Cherry Hinton Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB1 9PB
Telephone number	01223568836
Fax number	01223568836

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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

Description of the school

The Spinney is an average sized primary school that is much over-subscribed. The ethnic mix of the pupil population is changing as the number from minority groups increases. About two thirds of the pupils are of White British heritage and there are a few pupils from each of ten other ethnic backgrounds. The overall number is now above the national average with half of the children in the Reception class of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) speaking English as an additional language. Attainment on entry is similar to that found nationally although it is below in mathematical development. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. An average proportion of pupils have learning difficulties and/ or disabilities although the number with statements of special educational need is much above average.

There has been a significant turnover of staff since the previous inspection. This includes a new headteacher, who has been in post for four terms, and a new deputy headteacher who has been in post since September 2007. In addition, there have been three other teachers appointed since the previous inspection. The school runs a breakfast club for pupils attending the school. The school has gained the following awards: Investors in People; Healthy Schools, Sports Activemark, The ICT Mark and The International Schools award.

Key for inspection grades

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

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 1

The Spinney is an outstanding school where pupils thrive in both their academic and personal development. Pupils love school and learning and they are exceptionally well prepared for their move to secondary education. Parents are almost unanimous in their support and are pleased to have chosen the school for their children. The many positive comments from parents are summed up by the comment: 'I am proud that my children attend The Spinney. There is always such a lovely atmosphere amongst staff, pupils and parents, and the children's enthusiasm for learning reflects the effort and the values that the teachers invest in the children.'

Pupils make outstanding progress, particularly in Years 3 to 6, because the staff know them well and meet their different learning needs. Children in the Reception Year make good progress, particularly in their personal and social skills and on entry to Year 1, most attain the expected goals. Progress has slowed in Years 1 and 2 in the past, partly due to the high turnover of staff, and standards at the end of Year 2 have been in line with the national average. However, because provision in these years is now outstanding, progress is quickening and current Year 2 pupils are on course to attain standards that are stronger in reading, writing and mathematics than they have been for the past three years. Progress quickens significantly in Years 3 to 6. Here too, provision, particularly for teaching and learning, is outstanding. Standards in national tests have been significantly above average in most years, and the provisional results in the 2008 tests show standards that are exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science.

Outstanding teaching and the excellent curriculum mean that pupils thoroughly enjoy lessons. Teachers are highly skilled in managing the pupils' behaviour and ensure that classrooms present a calm and orderly learning atmosphere in which relationships are excellent and pupils are confident and secure. They ensure that pupils are clear about what has to be learned, and also what they have to do to succeed. The recent emphasis on developing pupils' independence in learning is highly successful. The school's excellent systems for tracking pupils' progress helps to pinpoint any pupils that are in danger of falling behind and because teachers are supportive and provide a good range of activities, pupils that find learning hard make excellent progress. Their learning is aided by the high quality support that is given to them in class by the teaching assistants.

Excellent attention is paid to pastoral care and the well-being of pupils. This helps them to feel safe and secure in their surroundings so they develop well as individuals. Consequently, their personal development is outstanding. Pupils relish the many opportunities that they have for taking responsibility. For example, pupils enjoy leading house assemblies in which they share their interests and skills with others. Pupils even organise and operate a wide range of clubs for themselves. They are keenly aware of the need to lead healthy lifestyles and of their own safety both in and outside the school.

The school has maintained the very high quality of provision and leadership and management found at the time of the previous inspection. The leadership and management of the new headteacher are outstanding. Working in close partnership with the new deputy headteacher, who also provides outstanding leadership, she is already much admired by governors, parents, staff and pupils. She has ensured that the school's overall effectiveness has remained outstanding. She has a very clear vision for the future of the school, which includes a clear focus on raising achievement and standards, particularly at Key Stage 1, and in developing staff

to make sure this happens. The improvements made since the previous inspection demonstrate an excellent capacity for further improvement.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Children achieve well and by the end of Reception many achieve, and some exceed, the goals expected. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It is aided by the staff working in close partnership and planning activities as a team. Very good questioning by the teacher extends children's thinking and vocabulary. They ensure that relatively weak speaking and listening skills are boosted by a strong focus being placed on teaching letters and sounds. This makes a significant contribution to the children's good progress in early literacy proficiency. Staff are skilled in helping children to gain an increasingly broad understanding across all areas of learning because the children are provided with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills gained from one area to another and their activities are imaginatively planned to do this. Good assessment procedures help teachers plan activities that reflect children's interests, prior experiences and learning needs. However, whilst activities in the classroom are of good quality and well organised, opportunities for development through the outdoor curriculum are restricted as there is not yet a covered area to provide shade and shelter. The excellent quality of care and support encourages children to become independent. Their welfare is given top priority and this is an important key in helping them to flourish and feel safe. It also results in outstanding personal, social and emotional development.

Management is good and the links with local nurseries and Year 1 ensure continuity in learning. Parents are very pleased with the start their children make and typically say: 'The school is a wonderful place to start our children's education and we have chosen this school over others that are nearer as it provides a caring and nurturing environment.'

What the school should do to improve further

- Accelerate the progress of pupils in Years 1 and 2 to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Provide shade and cover for the outdoor learning area in the Reception class.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 1

The high quality of teaching and learning ensures that pupils achieve outstandingly well, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Results in national tests for pupils in Year 2 have been at the national average for the past three years and there are signs of progress accelerating because the teaching team is now of high quality and is more settled than has been in the past. In consequence, progress is now outstanding, and pupils in Year 2 are on course to attain standards that are higher in reading, writing and mathematics than in the past three years. This improved progress has been supported by close analysis of pupils' work enabling staff to ensure that the curriculum for reading, writing and mathematics is improved. For example, it was noted that although pupils' calculation skills were good, there were weaknesses in the way that they applied these skills in problem solving. Hence, an improvement project has been put into place to strengthen pupils' ability to apply and use mathematics.

In Years 3 to 6, pupils achieve exceptionally well and standards in tests have been significantly above average for the past three years. Provisional 2008 results show standards that are

exceptionally high in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence confirms the school's view that current pupils in Years 5 and 6 are on course to attain exceptionally high standards in English, mathematics and science. All groups of pupils achieve well. This is because teachers ensure that work is challenging for pupils who find learning easy and for those who find learning hard.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Pupils' highly positive attitudes towards school are reflected in their enthusiasm for work and their good levels of attendance. The school's inclusive ethos and the consistently good role models of adults enhance the pupils' personal development so they feel safe and happy. Spiritual, moral and cultural development is outstanding and is reflected in the pupils' obvious enjoyment of school. There are very positive relationships between adults and pupils and between the pupils themselves. Pupils know how to stay healthy, and confidently play a full part in the life of the school. They have very good opportunities to show responsibility and initiative, for example by organising events exceedingly well to raise funds for the local community and national charities. Pupils develop well as independent learners and gain a wide range of skills to help them in their future lives. There are many opportunities for them to work collaboratively. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exceptional.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 1

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding. Although pupils' progress, particularly in Years 1 and 2, has slowed in the past, there is high quality teaching in all year groups. Teachers use accurate assessments to ensure that work is very effectively matched to pupils' needs. They know how to interest and motivate their pupils, and the strong, positive ethos in the classrooms gives pupils confidence and helps their self-esteem. These positive attitudes engendered by challenging and yet sensitively managed lessons have been an important key to maintain pupils' engagement. In all lessons, teachers provide many opportunities for them to collaborate and, as well as further engaging interest in learning, this has boosted confidence and raised self-esteem.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

The curriculum is outstanding. There are very well-developed links between subjects that add interest and enjoyment to learning, and literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills are consistently planned into the topic cycle. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of additional activities including interesting visits which help to enrich learning. Particular themed weeks also enliven learning. There are well-established focused opportunities across many areas for pupils of all ages and abilities to work together. This is particularly helpful for gifted and talented pupils who benefit from working alongside others of similar ability.

A strong and unusual feature of the curriculum is the wide range of clubs that the pupils organise for themselves. This term there have been 12 different opportunities for pupils to attend a wide range of lunchtime activities including boys' dance, design, drama, singing, art and the popular 'Match Attax' swapping!

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Children thrive in the school's very positive and nurturing environment. They benefit extremely well from the very good procedures that care for, guide and support their personal needs, and very strong partnerships with other schools. There are effective procedures to ensure pupils are kept safe and for preventing and dealing with undesirable behaviour. In discussion, pupils say that they feel safe in school and that bullying is rare. Checks on the suitability of staff and procedures for child protection meet current requirements. The tracking of pupils' progress ensures that support is effectively matched to pupils' needs. Teachers use information very effectively to identify and support children who are at risk of underachieving. This enables staff to give effective support to all pupils, especially those who find learning more difficult, ensuring they are fully included and progress at a similar rate to all other pupils. Teaching assistants provide excellent support for the personal and academic needs of pupils. The good quality breakfast club is enjoyed by the pupils.

Leadership and management

Grade: 1

The school is led and managed exceptionally well. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and management and has been pivotal in maintaining the school's outstanding overall effectiveness. There is a very strong sense of teamwork fostered by senior staff, and a feeling of common purpose of improvement at all levels. Systems for self-review are well established and enable the school to have a very clear picture of areas that need improvement. This results in a high quality improvement plan that has been prepared by the newly developed senior leadership team. Although many of the subject leaders are new to their post, they are very well involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision and pupils' progress in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body fulfils its duties and supports the school well. Many are new governors and the routines and positive leadership example shown by more experienced governors impact positively on their work. The school is forward looking, reaching out into the community, and it promotes community cohesion well.

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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 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?	1
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

Achievement and standards

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

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	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 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

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	1
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**

15 December 2008

Dear Pupils

Inspection of The Spinney Primary School, Cambridge CB1 9PB

Thank you so much for making us welcome and for talking with us when we visited your school. We enjoyed finding out about The Spinney. We particularly enjoyed the Christmas Nativity play. We thought you were brilliant and I am sure your parents did too! We also were most impressed to hear about all the after school clubs that you organise for yourselves.

We agree with you and your parents that yours is an excellent school. Your achievement throughout the school is outstanding. We were very impressed with the way that you use so many skills across all your subjects. We enjoyed looking at the many displays of work that helped to show the wide variety of things that you are taught. Your teachers have excellent skills and they help you to learn exceptionally well. They plan interesting and exciting activities for you, and we can understand why you all love lessons and learning.

Your behaviour is excellent, you have very positive attitudes towards each other and we were very impressed how well all of you get on together. You have an excellent understanding of how to stay fit and healthy. Your new headteacher and deputy headteacher and all the other adults involved in leading and managing your school do an excellent job. They make sure that you receive the best possible education.

We have asked your school to do two things. Firstly, to make sure that pupils make more progress in Years 1 and 2 so that standards improve in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. Secondly, to make sure that the children in Reception class have a cover outside their classroom. This will enable them to be protected from the sun and rain and also for your parents to use it as a buggy park when they come to school!

Once again, thank you for your help. We know that the staff will help you to keep doing your best.

Best wishes

Keith Sadler

Lead inspector