

Summercroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130160
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	293610
Inspection dates	16-17 May 2007
Reporting inspector	Philip Mann HMI

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School	456
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Williams
Headteacher	Michael Smith
Date of previous school inspection	not applicable
School address	Parsonage Lane
	Bishops Stortford
	Hertfordshire
	CM23 5BJ
Telephone number	01279 307477
Fax number	01279 307478

Age group	3-11
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Introduction

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

Description of the school

Summercroft Primary School is larger than average with 456 pupils on roll. It was newly formed in 2006 from established junior and infant schools on the same site. This is its first inspection. A below average number of pupils experience learning difficulties and the proportion entitled to free school meals is very small. The majority of pupils are White British but about a tenth comes from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils whose first language is not English is below that found in most schools but rising due to its location. There are currently several pupils at the early stages of language acquisition in English. The school is accredited with Investors in People and Healthy Schools Award.

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 with some outstanding features, a view which its own, slightly cautious evaluation generally supports. However, evidence gained during the inspection makes it clear that the leadership of this newly amalgamated school is outstanding and that the headteacher has quickly established a very positive climate for learning. This is a significant strength and its impact has been considerable. One parent wrote that the school now provides, 'a harmonious atmosphere in which our children can flourish'. These words are echoed by many others and supported by inspectors.

Very effective leadership and management have also ensured that pupils' achievement is good in many areas. The pupils' personal development and well-being are outstanding. Relationships are very positive between pupils and adults and pupils themselves. Behaviour is excellent. All pupils love coming to school, speak confidently about all that it offers and strive to do their best. As a result, attendance is good and the vast majority attain standards that are well above average by the time they leave for secondary school.

The quality of education is good and has some significant strengths. Teaching and learning, and therefore achievement, are good overall but vary between satisfactory and outstanding. When outstanding, lessons are very well planned, exciting and clearly focussed on the needs of all pupils. In less impressive lessons, the work set sometimes lacks the right degree of challenge. Marking and feedback occur regularly but are often not used effectively enough to set new personal targets for pupils to achieve. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is good. There is a broad range of learning experiences planned for all other pupils with a good balance between all subjects. The wide range of extra activities and level of enrichment are significant strengths. Links with other agencies are firmly established. Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good. However, the support in class for those whose first language is not English is not always effective because staff do not yet have sufficient skills or experience to cater effectively for the needs of these pupils.

The level of guidance and support for other pupils is good. Safeguarding procedures are robust and effective. New pupils quickly become part of the school community because of excellent pastoral care and effective monitoring of personal development. However, the monitoring of academic progress is less secure because assessment procedures are not yet of a consistent quality across the school.

Leadership and management of the school are good overall. However, senior leaders and those with other responsibilities provide outstanding leadership and have been directly responsible for moving the school forward significantly in a very short time. Consultation with staff and parents is developing well. Governance is good and individual governors are playing an increasing role in monitoring the school's work. As a result, the governing body has a clear view of the school's strengths and areas needing improvement. It is now well placed to oversee the next stages of the school's development. Taking all factors into account, the school gives good value for money and demonstrates an excellent capacity for further improvement.

What the school should do to improve further

- Make better use of personal targets to help individuals to sustain their high standards and to take responsibility for their own progress wherever possible.
- Improve levels of support in school for pupils whose first language is not English.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Achievement and standards are good. Pupils make good progress across the school from above average starting points when starting in Year 1, to attain well above average standards in English, mathematics and science by the end of Year 6. The 2006 national tests results confirm that standards are high. Current teacher assessments indicate that these high standards are being maintained with most pupils likely to meet the challenging targets set and with about a third of pupils writing at the higher Level 5. The prevalence of high quality descriptive prose, such as that offered by one Year 6 pupil who wrote: 'Bright blue scarves swirling like crashing waves, swishing like currents, swooping and curving like birds in the sky', fully exemplifies the high standards being achieved. Overall, there are no significant differences between the achievement of girls and boys. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used especially well to support pupil achievement in many subjects. Many pupils and especially boys speak very favourably about its use and demonstrate high levels of competence for their age.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress in lessons because work is carefully matched to need. However, the achievement of the growing number of pupils joining the school whose first language is not English is only satisfactory, although their proficiency increases during their time in the school as they become more confident in spoken English.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being are outstanding. Pupils enjoy school and attendance is good. They say that there is little bullying in school. Pupils demonstrate an excellent awareness of how to stay safe and help each other. For example, Year 3 pupils said that they were not worried about the move to the junior building because they had an older 'buddy' partner. Pupils are enthusiastic about taking exercise and are able to make healthy eating choices. This is helped considerably by the healthy and tasty meals made available by the school. School Council members take their role very seriously and feel that adults act on their views. Pupils respond very well to the wide range of responsibilities given to them and carry out tasks such as playground mediator and lunchtime monitor effectively. Pupils make very good progress in their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development through assemblies, lessons, visits and visitors. They are confident and work very well in cooperative and problem-solving situations and respond enthusiastically to 'Talking Group' activities when pupils of different ages have excellent opportunities to discuss important issues. Older pupils regularly plan and organise fund-raising events for charities on a business model. This, together with their good achievement in basic skills, prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

The quality of teaching and learning is good and plays a key part in enabling the school to reach and maintain the high academic standards it achieves. Teachers are fully committed to those they teach. Pupils of all ages enjoy lessons and are eager to learn because teachers, effectively supported by teaching assistants, invariably present learning in ways that excite and stimulate them. In this respect, two inspiring lessons in ICT and history spring to mind. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work with learning partners and take an increasingly active part in their own learning. The level of challenge is high for most pupils and progress is rapid. However, the progress of some more able pupils is not always as quick as it might be because occasionally teaching does not always cater fully for their needs.

Assessment varies in quality. In the Foundation Stage, it is very good. Elsewhere in the school it is not as consistently effective, especially in the quality of marking and target setting. The school is currently tackling this issue with a view to ensuring that pupils are fully aware of what they need to do to improve.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 2

The curriculum is good. The provision for the Foundation Stage children is of high quality, enabling them to make a fast start to their learning. In Years 1 to 6, provision in English, mathematics and science is consistently well planned, ensuring that pupils continue to make good progress. The provision for ICT is now increasingly well embedded in pupils' learning across the curriculum. Support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good, being based on strong and well established arrangements and provision. While the school is very supportive of those pupils needing additional help with learning English, similar cross-school policies and plans for meeting their needs are not in place.

All other subjects are also well planned and provide pupils with interesting and exciting opportunities to extend their learning. Music is a notable strength in this respect. The curriculum is now increasingly, and successfully, enabling pupils to develop and apply their knowledge and skills in a wider variety of cross-curricular contexts. The school makes very good use of the local community to add breadth and enrichment to its work. The provision for promoting pupils' personal development, including personal, social and health education, assemblies and after-school activities is of a high order.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 2

Care, guidance and support are good. Arrangements for child protection, health and safety and the safeguarding of pupils are securely implemented. Procedures to promote good behaviour and safety are consistently applied by all members of staff with very good results. Induction procedures into school are very good. The school tracks pupils' attainment effectively to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress.

Relevant programmes are in place to help those who have not made as much progress as they could. The school has improved communication with parents and the majority are very happy with the school's work. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, vulnerable pupils and those with particular gifts are supported effectively. The school works collaboratively with external agencies to support their needs.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good overall with some significant strengths. The headteacher and deputy headteachers have provided outstanding leadership during the pre and post amalgamation period to create a fully unified school and an excellent learning environment for pupils. Expectations are high and challenging targets are set for pupils and staff alike in order to raise standards further. Roles and responsibilities are delegated well and teamwork is an especially strong feature. A culture of effective self-evaluation and review has been firmly established. Governors play an increasingly prominent role in this process and work closely with subject leaders and senior managers to effectively monitor the school's work. As a result, they have a clear view of its strengths and weaknesses and long term planning for future school improvement is good.

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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
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well-being?	2
The quality and standards in the Foundation Stage	2
The effectiveness and efficiency of boarding provision	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards ¹ 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?	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The behaviour of learners	1
The attendance of learners	2
How well learners enjoy their education	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	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

¹ 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.

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?	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	1
How effectively performance is monitored, evaluated and improved to meet challenging targets	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



18 May 2007

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Summercroft Primary School, Bishops Stortford, CM23 5BJ

On behalf of the inspection team I would like to thank you all for making us feel so welcome during our time with you. It is clear to us all that you love being at school.

Many of you told us that you like school because the teachers make your lessons interesting, help you in your learning and plan many exciting things for you to do. The inspectors agree with you because Summercroft Primary is a good school with several outstanding features. Your behaviour in and around the school is excellent and you all tackle your work with such enthusiasm. It was great to see many of you working so well with classmates and when discussing important issues about friendship in your 'Talking Groups'. Mr Smith leads and manages the school really well and with the help of the staff, he has created a really good place where you can work and succeed very well.

However, there are some things that still need to be made a bit better. Teachers mark your work regularly but sometimes they do not always make it clear in your books what you need to do next to improve. Targets are set for you but not all of you are always sure what they are. Also, extra help is not always available in lessons for those of you learning English for the first time when you start school. These are all things that the teachers are going to work at in order that you can all make even better progress.

Finally, the governors work hard to make sure that the headteacher and staff are provided with everything they need to run the school well. They are very proud of what has been achieved so far and they have a clear picture of what needs to be done next to make the school even better.

Once again, thank you for making us all so welcome and good luck for the future.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann HMI