

Summercroft Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	130160
Local Authority	Hertfordshire
Inspection number	354329
Inspection dates	17–18 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Martin Beale

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 of pupils on the school roll	460
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Margaret Williams
Headteacher	Michael Smith
Date of previous school inspection	16 May 2007
School address	Parsonage Lane Bishops Stortford Hertfordshire CM23 5BJ
Telephone number	01279 307477
Fax number	01279 307478
Email address	admin@summercroft.herts.sch.uk

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Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester M2 7LA

T: 08456 404045
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by four additional inspectors. They visited 21 lessons, observing 16 teachers at least once, and held meetings with staff, groups of pupils and three members of the governing body. Informal discussions were also held with parents as they arrived with their children at the start of the day. Inspectors observed the school's work, and scrutinised assessment information, pupils' books, records of pupils' progress and improvement plans. They analysed 163 responses to the parents' questionnaires, 189 to the pupils' survey and 35 to the staff questionnaire.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- how effectively teachers set work to challenge the more able pupils
- the success of action to make pupils more aware of how to improve their work and meet their targets
- how effectively the school supports the academic and personal development of its more vulnerable pupils.

Information about the school

Most pupils are from White British backgrounds in this large school. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is well below average. Few pupils are from homes where English is not the first language. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are taught in the Nursery and two Reception classes. The school has received the Active Mark award and has achieved Healthy Schools status.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

1

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

1

Main findings

Summercroft has taken great strides forward in recent years in becoming an outstanding school under the strong and purposeful leadership of the headteacher and deputy headteacher. Parents have great confidence in the headteacher and his staff to do the very best for their children. One parent reflected the views of many when writing, 'We feel very lucky to be part of Summercroft, which provides so many endless fantastic opportunities during and after school.'

The pupils are given an excellent foundation for success in the future, both academically and in the development of outstanding personal qualities. This view is shared almost without exception by parents. The youngest children get off to a very rapid start in the outstanding Early Years Foundation Stage classes, developing many of the attributes that stand them in good stead for their learning in subsequent years. Pupils make good and improving progress across the rest of the school and attainment is high by the time they leave Year 6, although the school is aware that even more pupils ought to be reaching higher levels. The emphasis on greater challenge for the more able pupils is having an impact, but not always consistently in each class. Furthermore, marking is not always helpful for pupils in their quest to improve their work.

The main factors accounting for the pupils' good learning and progress are:

- much stimulating teaching that grabs the pupils' attention and drives their learning forward at pace
- an outstanding curriculum that pays careful attention to developing basic skills and making learning more interesting through 'Creative Learning Journeys'
- the use of new technology by teachers to make lessons more interesting and by pupils to enhance their learning
- highly effective links with other organisations to broaden the pupils' experiences and provide further expertise where needed
- the very positive attitudes of the pupils and their determination to succeed.

The school is highly effective in supporting its more vulnerable pupils. High on the list of the school's successes is the intensive drive to do what is best for all pupils and to reduce any barriers to their learning and personal development. The quality of care, guidance and support for pupils is outstanding. By building on very strong links with home, the school has a very clear understanding of the circumstances of families and individual pupils from which to tailor support.

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The rigorous attention paid to safeguarding the well-being of the pupils means that they feel very safe in school and say that there is always someone to confide in with a problem. This is a view unanimously shared by parents, as is the judgement that the pupils have an excellent understanding of how to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Their behaviour is outstanding both in lessons and around the school, contributing very significantly not just to their learning but also to the harmonious and purposeful atmosphere. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also outstanding. One parent reflected this when writing, 'This is a lively, friendly school filled with happy and considerate children.' Pupils treat everyone with great respect, carefully listen to the views of others and ensure that no-one is left out or unhappy.

The school's outstanding capacity for improvement is based on the continual reflection by staff, and relentless focus on tackling identified shortcomings and improving outcomes for the pupils. Senior leaders and the governing body base planning on a sharp understanding of the school's qualities and they have an excellent record of improvement since the last inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate learning further and bring teaching consistently up to the quality of the best by:
 - ensuring that the more able pupils are consistently challenged in lessons
 - improving marking so that pupils are clear about the steps they need to take to improve and have an opportunity to respond to their teachers' comments.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils

1

Year 6 test results have been consistently well above average and current evidence indicates that this is being maintained with improvements in both writing and mathematics. The pupils develop their basic skills at a good pace and apply them in a wide range of contexts. They concentrate on activities, work hard and show great enthusiasm for their learning. These qualities support their good progress and were particularly evident when Year 3 pupils wrote poems in the style of Peter Dixon's 'Where do all the teachers go?' They show great pride in their work and support each other very constructively either when discussing ideas or working jointly on a task. The pupils become more independent as they get older and are increasingly involved in making decisions about their learning, as shown in notes on their 'Working Walls' suggesting topic areas they wish to study.

The pupils respect differences and celebrate the values they have in common. They show they are very sensitive to each other's points of view, such as when discussing issues and listening to other perspectives. Pupils get on very well with each other and say they understand the consequences of their actions. Consequently, there are almost no incidents of bullying or inappropriate behaviour.

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Pupils are very keen to take part in a variety of sporting activities and continually apply their excellent understanding of healthy lifestyles when making choices over diet and exercise. The mixed-age 'Talking Groups', where pupils share ideas and work as teams, help to generate a close family atmosphere and give the pupils a voice in school developments. They take their responsibilities as energy monitors, lunchtime helpers and house captains with great pride. They raise money for charities but have only limited links with the world beyond the local area.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	1
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	2
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	2
The extent to which pupils feel safe	1
Pupils' behaviour	1
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	2
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	2
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1

How effective is the provision?

Teaching is usually good and there are outstanding features to several lessons. Classrooms are stimulating and calm places in which to learn because of the helpful displays and the way most pupils respond to their teacher's expectations of their behaviour. Teachers make learning enjoyable through interesting activities and the creative use of resources, including new technology. Teachers are using assessment information increasingly effectively to plan lessons and deploy support staff to meet the pupils' needs, but not always to ensure consistent challenge for the more able pupils. Marking is also inconsistent in the way it helps pupils to meet their targets and teachers do not routinely give sufficient time for them to respond to their suggestions.

The pupils' learning is based on a series of interesting experiences on a daily basis. By keeping these continually under review, programmes are adapted quickly to meet the pupils' needs and interests and to ensure that links between subjects support the

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low

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development of key skills. Many activities are provided to broaden the pupils’ experiences both during and beyond the school day, and enriched through events such as ‘India Day’ and the many opportunities for music and other extra-curricular activities. Close links with other schools strengthen opportunities for sport and provide additional activities for gifted and talented pupils.

Arrangements to help pupils settle in, to transfer between classes and move on to secondary school are very sensitively handled. They include individual transition plans for the more vulnerable pupils who might find change difficult. The school treats pupils as individuals and nurtures their development by carefully assessing and then sharply tailoring support to meet their particular needs. This is supplemented by other professionals who provide further expertise to help the school to support the good progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	2
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	2
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils’ needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	1
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	1

How effective are leadership and management?

The headteacher and the governing body have established a very clear direction and are taking staff with them in the drive to improve the pupils’ achievement further. Procedures to check on the school’s performance are thorough and any concerns that emerge are tackled rigorously. Challenging targets are set as a benchmark to check how everyone is performing and to plan action where they are not being met. The school can point to many examples where it has effectively developed its staff.

The governing body is influential in planning the long-term direction of the school, and is developing closer links with the school in order to check the impact of their policies. It ensures that procedures for safeguarding the pupils and vetting all those who work in the school are constantly under review and regularly updated to reflect changing circumstances. These processes are enhanced by very close links with outside services, including providing guidance on how to deal with pupils whose behaviour might cause danger to themselves or others. This is a particularly valuable example where the benefits are seen of the strong commitment to partnership working. The school would not be able to support pupils or enrich their experiences effectively were it not for the expertise brought in through links with a variety of outside organisations and the excellent value for money this provides. Furthermore, parents are very happy with the links forged between home and school.

The commitment to equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination permeates the

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school at all levels. As a consequence, any gaps in performance between different groups are tackled vigorously if and when they arise. The school is a very cohesive community. Staff and governors have a clear understanding of the context of the community they serve. They plan to support community cohesion and evaluate its impact, but have identified links nationally and globally are the relatively weaker elements.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	1
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	1
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	2
The effectiveness of the school’s engagement with parents and carers	1
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	1
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	1
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	2
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	1

Early Years Foundation Stage

The whole setting is a stimulating and welcoming environment in which the children feel very safe and where their learning can thrive. All adults work very closely as a team to ensure consistency to the children’s experiences across the classes. Thorough attention is paid to the children’s safety and well-being. They settle in quickly through very carefully planned induction arrangements based on developing a strong partnership with home, such as through afternoon ‘tea taster’ sessions for new intakes. This was summed up neatly by one parent when writing, ‘My child’s confidence has soared since attending this school.’

The children make very rapid progress in all areas of learning from skill levels that are as expected for their age on entry, firmly developing their skills so that by the time they leave Reception the majority exceed the goals expected in all areas of their learning. Their social skills are particularly well developed and they greatly enjoy the school day, becoming quickly immersed in the activities which are targeted carefully at meeting their individual needs and interests. They are encouraged at all times, and with great success, to be independent. Children contribute to planning, follow their own ideas with enthusiasm and curiosity, and take responsibility for selecting their own resources. They play exceptionally well together and their behaviour is

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excellent.

The children’s experiences are based on rich and imaginative experiences across all classes, such as when the children develop their writing skills in the Travel Agents by writing boarding passes and tickets. The teaching is inspirational, with an excellent balance between activities led by the adults and those developed by the pupils themselves. Rigorous assessments are maintained in high quality ‘learning journals’ to which the children and their parents have access. A key to the success of the setting is the way children can access high quality resources to pursue their interests and adults step in with timely comments to take their learning forward.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	1
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	1

Views of parents and carers

The inspection team concurs with the parents’ responses to the questionnaire showing how are very happy they are with the school’s work. Amongst many other very favourable views, parents are almost unanimous in saying that their children enjoy school, are making good progress and that teaching is good.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Summercroft Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspection team received 163 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 460 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	109	67	51	31	3	2	0	0
The school keeps my child safe	115	71	48	29	0	0	0	0
The school informs me about my child's progress	77	47	80	49	6	4	0	0
My child is making enough progress at this school	79	48	79	48	5	3	0	0
The teaching is good at this school	97	60	60	37	2	1	0	0
The school helps me to support my child's learning	89	55	67	41	7	4	0	0
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	95	58	65	40	1	1	0	0
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	73	45	83	51	1	1	0	0
The school meets my child's particular needs	90	55	66	40	6	4	0	0
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	63	39	96	59	2	1	0	0
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	70	43	86	53	2	1	0	0
The school is led and managed effectively	100	61	61	37	1	1	0	0
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	112	69	50	31	0	0	0	0

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	51	45	0	4
Primary schools	6	41	42	10
Secondary schools	8	34	44	14
Sixth forms	10	37	50	3
Special schools	32	38	25	5
Pupil referral units	12	43	31	14
All schools	9	40	40	10

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above is for the period 1 September to 31 December 2009 and is the most recently published data available (see www.ofsted.gov.uk). Please note that the sample of schools inspected during the autumn term 2009 was not representative of all schools nationally, as weaker schools are inspected more frequently than good or outstanding schools.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



21 June 2010

Dear Pupils

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

Thank you all very much for your friendliness and help when we visited your school recently and for sharing your views with us. We judge that Summercroft Primary School is outstanding. We were pleased to see how much you enjoy school and we agree with you that your teachers take excellent care of you. Your behaviour is outstanding. Those of you who have special jobs, like energy monitors and house captains, carry out your duties very responsibly.

The youngest of you in the Nursery and Reception classes have a wonderful start to your school careers. The rest of you are taught well and have very interesting things to learn. These are the main reasons why you are making good progress during your time in school, learning the skills you need for the future and becoming mature and responsible people. You clearly enjoy the wide range of exciting activities provided for you, including your 'Creative Learning Journeys'. We really enjoyed watching the way you discussed ideas with your learning partners and used computers to help you learn.

Everyone is trying hard to make the school even better. We have asked the teachers and other adults to help your learning by ensuring that they extend those of you who are capable of learning more rapidly, and by making their marking more helpful and giving you time to respond to their comments.

We are sure that you and your teachers will work hard to make these improvements. You can play your part in helping the school to get even better by continuing to take such great pride in your school and continuing to be so enthusiastic about learning.

I wish you well for the future.

Yours sincerely

Martin Beale
Lead inspector

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