

Cooks Spinney Primary School and Nursery

Cooks Spinney, Harlow, Essex CM20 3BW

Inspection dates

14–15 June 2017

Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- Cooks Spinney Primary Academy and Nursery has improved significantly in the recent past.
- Pupils' preparation for the next stage of their education is strong. Year 6 national test results in 2016 were outstanding. The school succeeds in its aim to equip pupils with the social, literacy and numeracy skills to thrive.
- Pupils' progress is good overall and attainment is rising. However, the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, are not challenged well in some classes.
- School leaders, working closely with the trust, are changing the culture of the school. Pupils increasingly realise that traits such as resilience and effort lead to success. They are aspirational for the future.
- School leaders, including the local advisory board, have an accurate grasp of the school's strengths and of the areas which need to improve further.
- Teachers regularly check pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics, to see if pupils do well, explain how they can improve and encourage them to respond. Checks in other subjects do not have the same impact.
- Although the quality of teaching is good overall, recent improvements need longer to become fully established.
- Parents agree that their children feel happy, safe and well cared for in school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good overall and they respond positively to the school's reward system.
- Children make good progress in the early years and are well prepared for Year 1. However, activities are not always matched to children's prior attainment. Some tasks given to the most able, for example, lack sufficient challenge.
- Parents are generally positive about the school. Many who spoke to inspectors praised the recent improvements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment further by ensuring that teachers fully understand, and implement effectively, the school's agreed approaches to teaching and learning.
- Ensure that the most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, have sufficient challenge in lessons.
- Ensure that feedback in foundation subjects has a greater impact on pupils' subsequent work, so they better understand what they have accomplished, and what they need to improve.
- Further improve progress in the early years by analysing and interpreting data more accurately, so that activities are more closely matched to children's prior attainment, particularly the most able children, including the most able disadvantaged children.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Inspectors echo the thoughts of parents spoken to, one typical comment being, 'The changes to the school in recent years have been very positive and they are continuing to improve year-on-year.'
- Leaders, governors and staff's high aspirations for all pupils ensure that Cooks Spinney is fully inclusive. Nearly every pupil responding to their online survey agreed staff encourage them to respect other people.
- Leaders' clear understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement ensures that changes are being made to the aspects of the school's work where they are most needed.
- Leaders have complementary skills and form an effective team. Each individual's expertise and experience are used well. Each member knows what is expected of them, and what they can expect of others.
- Leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching and learning, provide useful advice and guidance when necessary and see it is acted upon. As a result, teachers are successfully implementing most of the changes leaders have introduced. All staff responding to their online survey agreed that leaders use professional development effectively to support teachers' improvement.
- Subject leadership of reading, writing and mathematics has very successfully raised standards in these subjects. The trust plays a part in ensuring the effective leadership of other subjects, particularly to ensure that all required curriculum areas are covered.
- Provision for pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well managed. Spending directly benefits pupils. Teachers said they receive useful training to enable them to meet the needs of pupils in their classes.
- Provision for disadvantaged pupils is very well-led and managed. As a result, these pupils make similarly good progress to their peers and achieve well. Funds are also allocated to wider opportunities so pupils develop as 'well-rounded' individuals.
- Additional primary school sport funding is used very effectively. Specialist staff, some from the trust's secondary school, improve pupils' skills and techniques. Extra activities, including competitive games, offer pupils further experiences. Each day at the end of class lessons, a high proportion of pupils join in the wide variety of free extra-curricular activities. Pupils fully understand the role and importance of exercise to healthy living.
- The curriculum is innovative. Subjects are linked, so new learning in one often reinforces previous learning in another. Each new topic starts with a 'wow' activity to spark pupils' curiosity. Visits and visitors draw pupils into learning. For example, pupils were fascinated when a recent topic began with a visit from insects including a tarantula. Aspects such as the 'big question' encourage and foster pupils' curiosity about the world around them. Pupils develop enquiring minds.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Again, learning is woven into the wider curriculum, so it makes sense. For example, a study of

'Victorians' includes the lack of children's rights at that time, or a topic about street art considers other points of view, such as whether it is graffiti.

- British values are also embedded in the curriculum, so pupils' understanding is clear. In Year 5, for example, pupils study the Law at different historical times, and how it has evolved. Pupils said that, 'Voting is fair because everyone has an equal say.'
- Links with other schools are strong. Within the trust, the school benefits from particularly close links with the secondary school. Knowing key staff, and using the secondary school's facilities, helps pupils' transition. Staff gain too, from sharing expertise and ideas.
- The school benefits from membership of the trust. On a practical level, economies of scale enable more efficient use of funds. The trust takes responsibility for a number of activities so that the local advisory board, for example, can focus their energy and attention on teaching and learning.
- School leaders, working closely with the trust, ensure that the school is fully staffed. However, the turnover of staff is still relatively high. For example, the teachers who played a significant role in the excellent achievements of Year 6 in 2016, have both left. This turnover can be a factor in inconsistencies.
- The school works closely with the local authority and draws on its expertise to give, for example, a robust external view of the school's progress.
- Parents' positive view of the school is reflected in their response to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. Roughly four in every five responding said they would recommend the school to another parent. One parent said, 'They have exceeded all my hopes and my expectations, they seem to know how to get the best from every child.'

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- With the support of the trust, governors are able to focus almost entirely on the school's core purpose, the quality of education provided.
- Governors receive, and act on, a wide range of information about the school, including information about pupils' progress. They compare this with information from other sources, to check it matches, and challenge leaders if it does not.
- Governors monitor the work of the school for themselves, too. Recently, they have been very pleased with improvements in how neatly and tidily pupils present their work.
- Governors closely monitor the use of additional funding, to ensure that it is used effectively. They are pleased that additional pupil premium funding has supported improving standards, and that additional sport funding has led to higher levels of pupil participation in both competitive and recreational sport.
- Governors rigorously oversee the performance of staff, including the headteacher, drawing on the advice of the trust. They check performance targets are met and pay increases are appropriately awarded.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- The school's culture promotes vigilance for the safeguarding of pupils. All staff are fully aware of their responsibilities, and know what to look for in order to keep pupils safe.
- Leaders 'lead from the front' and set a strong example. They monitor safeguarding closely. As a result, they noticed very few referrals from support staff. This led to further staff training, and greater awareness. Referrals subsequently increased.
- Staff and governors' regular training and updates, including about the 'Prevent' duty, help ensure that awareness levels do not drop. Staff's knowledge enables them to identify potentially vulnerable pupils, so that appropriate action can be taken.
- Staff, including those recently appointed, say they are confident in raising any concerns they might have about pupils' safety or welfare. The school's clear systems effectively record concerns and note actions taken.
- Documentation is thorough. Checks on the suitability of staff, governors, regular volunteers and contractors are comprehensive and complete.
- Relationships with outside agencies are strong. School staff call on a range of expertise to seek help to support pupils and vulnerable families.
- Nine in every 10 parents who responded to their online survey agreed that the school keeps their children safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Leaders have successfully improved the quality of teaching, learning and assessment since the previous inspection.
- Lessons run smoothly and pupils generally behave well. Most teachers encourage and expect pupils to take pride in their work and present it to a good standard.
- Teachers of all classes, but particularly those classes at risk of falling behind, regularly meet leaders who check progress is good, and make changes if it is not.
- Teachers plan well-structured lessons. Year teams work together, sharing expertise and ideas. However, some lessons do not incorporate sufficient challenge for the most able pupils.
- Teachers deploy the well-trained teaching assistants effectively. This is an improvement since the previous inspection.
- Questioning is used effectively, particularly to gauge if pupils understand and are ready to move on, or need more time to practice first.
- Teachers promote pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively. In lessons such as 'discussion', pupils articulate their thinking, listen to the views of others and respond.
- Reading is taught well. Whether basic reading skills, such as phonics, or more advanced ones, like inference, most teaching is effective.
- Teaching of writing is good. Teachers have high expectations that pupils punctuate and spell accurately. Pupils have regular opportunities to write at length, often in relevant

activities in other subjects. Both of these are good improvements since the previous inspection.

- Mathematics is taught well. Pupils have regular opportunities to use subject specific vocabulary, and to juggle number facts to solve problems. These, too, are important improvements since the previous inspection.
- Very effective use is made of specialist teaching. Pupils' skills can be honed because these staff have sufficient expertise to spot the small improvements that refine skills.
- Teachers make a strong commitment to the wider life of the school. For example, they welcome training opportunities and regularly lead after-school clubs.
- The school's approach is to offer pupils choice of different levels of difficulty in their work. This is generally effective. Pupils largely understand what is expected of them, and how to use the system productively. One pupil said, 'If I get stuck, I move back a star and usually find this helps me understand.' However, tasks for the most able pupils sometimes lack sufficient challenge.
- Pupils willingly take responsibility for their own learning. For example, they make thoughtful and constructive comments about their own work, and that of others, to help one another learn.
- Homework is used effectively. The tasks themselves often extend or hone learning done in school, or offer pupils opportunities to research or be more creative. Beyond that they are very useful. One pupil told an inspector, 'Homework is useful because it teaches me to work to a deadline, and that's a skill for life.'
- Teachers' feedback to pupils closely follows the school's approach. In reading, writing and mathematics, it give pupils a clear picture of what they have achieved and where they need to focus their energies next. It encourages pupils to give their view, too. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. In other subjects, feedback has less impact, particularly on pupils' subsequent work.
- The many improvements to teaching and learning made by school leaders and the trust are bearing fruition. However, as teachers implement the changes, there remain variations across the school in different classes. Work seen in pupils' books and on visits to classrooms confirms this.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good. About nine in every 10 parents responding to their online survey agreed their children are happy in school, and nearly as many that their children are well looked after.
- Pupils' learning benefits from their positive attitudes. Events like 'Careers Week' open their eyes to the numerous opportunities open to them, and motivate them to learn.
- Pupils take pride in themselves, their school and their work. Since the previous inspection, the standard of presentation in pupils' workbooks is much improved.

- Pupils say they like the sense of community in the school. They like to help one another, and work and play together.
- Pupils willingly accept responsibility. They like being play leaders, and teaching younger pupils traditional games. Of immense pride to them is to earn a 'privilege card' and hold a trusted responsible role.
- Pupils' good understanding and awareness of safety is the result of regular reminders in lessons, and clear advice, sometimes from specialist organisations, in assemblies. Whether using the internet or a pair of scissors, pupils know how to keep themselves and others safe.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Four in every five parents responding to the online survey agreed the school makes sure pupils are well behaved.
- Pupils respond positively to the school's reward system. They enjoy earning 'pips' towards their 'apples of achievement'. Receiving an 'apple' is a special moment; class mates articulate the pupils' characteristics that led to the award. Recipients glow!
- Pupils know what staff expect of them, understand the school rules and usually stick to them. However, as reported at the previous inspection, a small number, usually boys, can lose concentration or cause others to do so. This continues currently.
- In the playground, play leaders will try to help younger pupils play productively. Pupils' behaviour as they move around the school is orderly.
- Pupils say they feel safe in school. They say bullying happens, but they have adults to turn to if they are worried. They are confident something would be done if bullying were to occur. About two thirds of parents expressing a view in their online survey said the school deals effectively with bullying.
- Attendance overall is broadly average and improving. School systems are clear and robust. Absence is followed up. The gates close promptly so the school day gets off to a brisk start. Pupils say they enjoy breakfast club, particularly being with their friends. Undoubtedly it plays a role in improving attendance and punctuality.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- The progress of pupils currently in the school is generally good. The school's checks on progress and the quality of work in pupils' books confirm this.
- Since joining the trust, the culture of the school has changed. Much greater emphasis is given to pupils' achievement.
- Children start in Nursery with skills and abilities mostly below those typical for their age. In both Nursery and Reception, they make rapid progress and are well prepared for Year 1. In the recent past, the proportion of children leaving the early years reaching a good level of development has risen year-on-year. By 2016, it was above the national figure. This improvement is likely to continue this year.

- This strong foundation is giving teachers in Year 1 and beyond a solid base to build on. As a result, pupils in key stage 1 are beginning to achieve more, too.
- Outcomes in phonics have improved, too. Pupils quickly learn to accurately link letters to the sounds they make, and use them to figure out unknown words. This improvement is largely because all adults use the same approach, and received good-quality training in its use.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good progress because pupil premium funding is having a positive impact on improving outcomes. Most current pupils do as well as their peers, an improvement since the previous inspection. The school's assessment information and work in pupils' books confirm this.
- The most able pupils, including the most able disadvantaged pupils, generally make good progress. However, when tasks lack sufficient challenge for them to 'get their teeth into', their progress stalls. This is one aspect of outcomes impacted by the variations in teaching as new approaches become embedded.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities generally make good progress from their individual starting points. They particularly do well when tasks they are given closely match their needs.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language generally do well. Extra support enables these pupils to quickly acquire the vocabulary they need to access learning.
- The academy and trust it joined inherited pupils with low attainment. As a result, the oldest year groups have a legacy of underachievement.
- The Year 6 pupils taking the national tests in 2016 made very rapid progress during their last year or two in school and attained outstanding results. This is largely because of their efforts, and the additional staff provided by the school so that groups could be much smaller and pupils received more guidance.
- Current Year 6 pupils are following a similar programme to rectify similar low prior attainment. Pupils' current workbooks suggest that the great majority are working at age-related expectations in writing and mathematics, although less than last year are exceeding it. Pupils' achievement in reading is stronger. Staff ensure that pupils meet a wide range of books and styles of writing to promote a love of reading.
- The Year 2 pupils taking the national tests in 2016 attained broadly average results. This reflects how variations in teaching can impact outcomes. School leaders have acted quickly to improve teaching and raise standards. These pupils, now in Year 3, currently receive extra help and are very closely monitored to see they catch up.
- This year in Year 2 an experienced and effective leader has worked alongside other able teachers. The school's information, and pupils' current workbooks, suggest Year 2 pupils have made good progress and are mostly working at or above age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics varies. In subjects such as physical education and music, specialist teaching gives pupils the precise guidance to master new techniques or hone those they know already. They do well. In other subjects, they do not routinely receive the precise feedback they get in, say, mathematics, so their progress is less secure.

Early years provision

Good

- The early years provision is good in both Nursery and Reception classes. Children make strong progress and have a solid foundation to build on as they move into Year 1.
- Teaching is generally good, but variations in teaching, similar to elsewhere in the school, exist here, too. The teaching of phonics is strong. Staff take every opportunity to encourage children to spot, recognise and sound out letters. Children are keen to practise drawing letters and writing numerals. Most staff use questioning well to promote learning, but some do not.
- Extra help for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities is effective because it is matched to targets set for these children. Disadvantaged children receive extra help to diminish the difference between themselves and other children.
- Children behave well and respond positively to staff. Children's attitudes to learning are good; they are inquisitive and keen to learn.
- Both in the classrooms and outdoors, children enjoy a good range of interesting and stimulating learning opportunities, some provided by staff and some they choose for themselves.
- Teamwork is effective. Staff awareness and understanding of safeguarding procedures and welfare requirements are good.
- Relationships with parents are positive. Parents are welcomed into early years and seen as partners in their children's education. Transition to school is smooth. Many children come from the on-site pre-school with which early years has positive relationships.
- Leadership is generally good. Relatively high numbers of staff changes in the recent past have caused some inconsistencies, for example in how procedures are followed. This is exacerbated because the school is rightly introducing new systems and procedures to further improve early years.
- Tasks given to children, particularly the most able children, including the most able disadvantaged, are not based sufficiently on an assessment of how well children did previously. These tasks can lack sufficient challenge.

School details

Unique reference number	140024
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10031371

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

Type of school	Primary and nursery
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	486
Appropriate authority	The local advisory board
Chair	Abigail Baker
Executive headteacher	Stuart Pope
Head of school	Neil Stirrat
Telephone number	01279 437590
Website	www.cooksspinneyprimary.com
Email address	admin@cooks-spinney.essex.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10–11 June 2015

Information about this school

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- The school is much larger than an average-sized primary school.
- The school operates two part-time Nursery classes, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.
- In the other year groups, from Reception to Year 6, there are two classes in each year with the exception of Year 4, in which there are three classes.
- Approximately seven in every 10 pupils are from a White British background.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is broadly average.

- The proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language is broadly average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by pupil premium funding is high.
- The proportion of pupils who receive support for their special educational needs and/or disabilities is below average.
- In 2016, the school met the government's floor standards, which are the minimum expectations of pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.
- The school offers breakfast club before school five days a week.
- During the inspection, the majority of Year 6 pupils were absent from school each day on educational visits arranged by the school.
- The school shares the site with an independent pre-school that is inspected separately.
- The school is part of the Burnt Mill Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors visited all classrooms. Some visits were conducted jointly with the executive headteacher, headteacher or other members of the senior leadership team. In addition, the inspectors observed small groups of pupils being taught.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read.
- The inspectors observed pupils in other activities and as they moved around the school and site.
- The inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, other leaders, teachers, other staff and governors. Inspectors also spoke with a representative of the Burnt Mill Academy Trust.
- The inspectors met with pupils to discuss their experiences at school.
- The views of 41 parents who responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, were taken into account. The inspectors also held informal discussions with parents. The inspectors considered the views of eight members of staff and 31 pupils who responded to their online surveys.
- The inspectors looked at a range of school documents and information. These included the school's development plan, checks on the quality of teaching, curriculum plans, minutes of meetings of the governing body and pupils' behaviour and attendance records. The inspectors also looked at arrangements for safeguarding procedures, including relevant records.

Inspection team

Robert Greatrex, lead inspector	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Hughes	Ofsted Inspector
Sue Cox	Ofsted Inspector

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Raising concerns and making a complaint about Ofsted', which is available from Ofsted's website: www.gov.uk/government/publications/complaints-about-ofsted. If you would like Ofsted to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 4234, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

You can use Parent View to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school. Ofsted will use the information parents and carers provide when deciding which schools to inspect and when and as part of the inspection.

You can also use Parent View to find out what other parents and carers think about schools in England. You can visit www.parentview.ofsted.gov.uk, or look for the link on the main Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 4234
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2017