

# Squirrel Hayes First School

Springfield Road, Biddulph, Stoke-on-Trent, ST8 7DF

**Inspection dates** 30 April–1 May 2014

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

### This is a good school.

- Achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is good.
- All groups, regardless of their background, make good progress from very low starting points.
- Although attainment at the end of Year 2 is below the national average, pupils are increasingly leaving Year 4 with skills and knowledge appropriate for their ages.
- Teaching across the school is consistently good.
- Teachers make the subjects taught fun and interesting and these are supported by a wide range of activities, which support pupils' learning.
- Pupils enjoy learning and feel very happy and safe in the school.
- Pupils' behaviour is good.
- Pupils have an excellent understanding of risk and how to stay safe.
- Parents are highly supportive with a 100% of those who replied stating they would recommend the school.
- Leadership and management at all levels are good and the school has continued to improve since the last inspection.
- The use of information on the progress pupils make is used effectively to make sure that any underachievement is tackled quickly.
- Governors work effectively with the senior leadership team to improve the quality of teaching and make sure the school continues to improve.

### It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Pupils' weaker skills in writing are slowing their rates of progress in other subjects.
- Pupils who enter the school at times other than those normally expected are not achieving as well as their peers in school.

## Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed 13 lessons, six of which were observed jointly with the headteacher.
- Inspectors scrutinised a wide range of school information regarding the progress pupils make, the quality of teaching over time, school improvement and the quality of safeguarding procedures. They also scrutinised attendance information.
- Inspectors heard a number of pupils read and scrutinised a range of their work across the school.
- Inspectors held meetings with a group of pupils, members of the governing body, members of the senior leadership team and with a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors took account of the 16 replies to the online parent questionnaire (Parent View), 42 responses to a recent school parent questionnaire and the 16 responses to the staff questionnaire. Inspectors also talked informally to a number of parents.

## Inspection team

Ronald Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Colin Lower

Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about this school

- Squirrel Hayes First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The school is organised into an Early Years Foundation Stage with a Nursery and a Reception class, a Year 1 class, 2 mixed Year 2/3 classes, a Year 4 class and a nurture group made up of pupils from across the school with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- The vast majority of pupils are of White British heritage.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs supported by school action is well above average. The proportion supported at school action plus or who have a statement of special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of pupils supported by the pupil premium, which provides additional funding for children in the care of the local authority and those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, is well above average.
- More pupils than average start or leave the school at other than the usual times. In some year-groups, the turnover of pupils has been particularly high.
- The school makes a room available for a privately run before- and after-school provision. This is inspected and reported upon separately.

### What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Raise the quality of teaching by providing greater opportunities for pupils to use their writing skills across all subject areas and so improve their rates of progress.
- Raise achievement for those pupils who enter the school at times other than those normally expected by making sure that strategies are in place to help them to settle in, to assess their needs quickly and so make rapid progress.

## Inspection judgements

### The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with skills and knowledge which are well-below those typically found at their ages. Due to good teaching, all pupils, regardless of their background, make good progress across the whole school. School information on pupils' progress and attainment shows that pupils are increasingly leaving Year 4 with skills and knowledge in line with those expected for their age.
- The Year 2 results in the 2013 national assessments were below average in reading, writing and mathematics; however, the progress that these pupils made from their very low starting points in Year 1 was good. The most able pupils in the school make good progress in line with that of their peers in school. School information on pupils' attainment shows that this is rising rapidly and the gap between them and their peers nationally is closing.
- Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage settle into the school quickly and excellent routines make them feel safe and secure. Many children enter the school lacking in confidence, and with weak language and communication skills. Good teaching makes sure that the children develop their skills effectively through a wide range of activities. The children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, their very low starting points mean they enter Key Stage 1 with skills that are below average.
- School information clearly shows that the results in the 2013 Key Stage 1 assessments were below average largely due to the high mobility in the school. The particular group of pupils concerned suffered over a 50% change of pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Year 2, with many entering the group just prior to the national assessments. Most of these new entrants had low levels of skills and knowledge for their age.
- Observations made during the inspection of pupils' progress during lessons match that shown in school information. This was further supported by scrutiny of pupils' work across the school and data about their achievement. In all subjects, pupils make good progress over time. However, the quality of pupils' handwriting is often poor as pupils are not provided with enough opportunities to practise their skills, and progress in other subjects is being prevented from being outstanding as pupils cannot always read their work easily.
- The vast majority of the pupils who enter the school at times other than those expected are pupils who receive extra support through the pupil premium. This means that they often do not have time to catch up with their peers in school. Those pupils receiving this funding who go through the whole school make progress in line with that of their peers and leave with skills and knowledge only approximately half a term behind their peers in school.
- Teachers have undergone training in the teaching of letters and the sounds they represent (phonics) and this has resulted in improvements in the teaching of reading across the school. The results in the 2013 phonics screening check were below average due to the poor language and communication skills the pupils enter the school with. However, as pupils move through the school they learn to enjoy reading and develop skills in line with those expected for their ages. This has resulted in pupils being able to use their skills to help them in other areas of learning. This is especially so in developing their language and communication skills.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress in line with their peers in school. In Squirrel Hayes, these pupils are also those entitled to support from the pupil premium funding. They therefore leave the school having closed the gap between themselves and their peers in school to within half a term. This is the case in reading, writing

and mathematics.

### **The quality of teaching is good**

- Teaching has improved steadily since the last inspection. Across the school, teaching is consistently good with some that is outstanding. Teachers use planning highly effectively alongside good monitoring and recording of pupils' progress. This results in teachers having a good understanding of where their pupils are and what they need to do to move their skills forward.
- Relationships are a strength of the school and so pupils are eager to learn and always want to do their best. Teachers, and the other adults who provide support, encourage positive attitudes by making learning fun and engaging. They have good subject knowledge and use questioning and discussion effectively to make sure that pupils understand what they are learning.
- In an effective Early Years Foundation Stage lesson, all the adults used good questioning and discussion to develop the children's language and communication skills. Basic mark-making skills were being practised alongside spoken language. Staff were making sure that children spoke in clear and correctly structured sentences, which they extended and enhanced in order to move the children forward.
- Teachers make sure that activities are challenging and yet suitable for their pupils' ages and abilities. All staff ensure the pupils are aware of how to improve through both spoken comments and constructive marking of work. Many examples were seen of the pupils' responses to these comments and how work was improved. Discussions with pupils also confirmed that they felt teachers helped them improve their work.
- Work in books, and around the school in general, also showed that the pupils' handwriting skills were not as good as expected for their ages. This is due to teachers not providing enough opportunities for them to practise their skills and so progress in some subjects is prevented from being outstanding. This is especially so for those pupils who enter the school at times other than those expected. The school is aware of this issue and has begun to create strategies to overcome this.
- The school has a policy of developing each pupil in the school and catering for their individual needs and abilities. Teachers' planning makes sure that this is the case in their lessons and this is why the school has raised pupils' achievement levels since the last inspection. Pupils are, therefore, well prepared for their future learning and, in most cases, school information shows that pupils continue to make rapid progress in their new schools.

### **The behaviour and safety of pupils are good**

- The behaviour of pupils is good. This is true throughout the school, and pupils have a positive attitude to learning. All pupils spoken to said they enjoyed learning and this view was further supported by the very positive views of the parents. Teachers, parents and pupils all feel that behaviour is good. Pupils stated there was little or no bullying and any issues that did arise were quickly and effectively dealt with by the staff.
- The development of this positive behaviour and attitude to learning starts in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Good routines, positive relationships and fun and exciting learning result in the children wanting to learn. Staff develop the children's confidence alongside their language and communication skills. As these develop, so does their achievement in all areas of learning.

- School information shows that attendance is rising and is above average. Discussions with pupils show their desire to be in school. As one pupils stated, 'We love coming to school because it is fun and we meet our friends.' The school has employed a home/school co-ordinator who has worked hard to reach families who have previously not been positive about the school. The parent questionnaire showed that a 100% of parents that completed the questionnaire support the school.
- Pupils take a pride in their school and attend lessons punctually. They keep themselves neat and tidy and stated they take their lead from their teachers. Teachers demonstrate pride in what they do and this provides a positive model for the pupils. Pupils are involved in the creation of the behaviour policy for the school and have an active role in all the risk assessments which are required during their learning.
- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. This is because pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and have a high level of understanding of risk. They know how to stay safe on the internet and feel that all staff keep them safe in school. This view is clearly shared by the parents.
- Behaviour and safety are not outstanding overall as pupils do occasionally lose concentration in lessons. This is usually when teaching is not quite at its best and pupils lose interest. Pupils also stated that they felt behaviour was only good because sometimes a few pupils did misbehave. During the inspection, a few pupils were observed not fully engaged in their learning and, although this did not affect others, it did slow their own rates of progress.

### **The leadership and management are good**

- The senior leadership team, alongside a strong governing body, has made sure that the school has continued to improve since the last inspection. They monitor all aspects of the school effectively and use this information to improve the school further. The quality of teaching has steadily improved due to the effective checking of teachers' performance and the provision of extra training for all staff.
- The senior leadership team and staff rightly have the full confidence of all parents, who feel the school does a good job. Leaders and managers at all levels monitor their areas of responsibility efficiently and are held fully accountable by the governing body. Both the senior leadership team and governing body check the quality of teaching and relate teachers' abilities to their pay and professional progression.
- Self-evaluation is accurate as staff have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Information on pupils' progress and attainment is used effectively to drive future learning for the pupils. This has resulted in the steady rise in achievement and pupils leaving the school with skills and knowledge appropriate for their age. Leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage are good due to the accuracy of their evaluation and monitoring.
- Pupil premium funding is used to provide one-to-one support for those pupils who have the most need. Funding is also used to pay for the home/school co-ordinator who has helped to develop very positive links with parents. Pupil premium funding has also been used to make sure that all pupils can access all aspects of school life. This includes providing these pupils with a positive start to the day via the breakfast club. All eligible pupils have benefited from the funding, which has improved their progress.

- The extra government funding for primary school sports is used to provide specialist sports instruction to the pupils and training for the staff. The pupils themselves commented that they enjoyed sporting activities more due to the wider range of activities available. These are further enhanced by a wider range of after-school and lunch-time activities. Many of these are linked to the close ties the school has with its partnership schools, which provide opportunities to compete with other pupils.
- The social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of the pupils in Squirrel Hayes is an outstanding feature. The senior leadership team and governors have worked hard since the last inspection to improve this aspect of the school. Pupils experience a very wide range of other cultures and religions through visits and visitors, providing them with an excellent understanding.
- The school has good links with the local authority who provide a good 'light-touch' approach to the school as they, alongside the parents, rightly feel that this is a good school. It monitors the school regularly and validates its information on pupils' progress and attainment. It has an accurate view of teaching and of leadership and management. The school also uses its links with its partnership schools to monitor and moderate its work.
- The school's results are heavily effected by high mobility in some year groups, and especially so as many of these pupils enter the school prior to the Key Stage 1 national assessments. Currently, the progress rates for these pupils are not as rapid as that for other pupils as the school has not provided sufficient support to enable them to develop their skills quickly enough to catch up with their peers in school.
- **The governance of the school:**
  - The governing body works closely with the senior leadership team and has a clear and accurate view of the school. Governors monitor the effectiveness of the quality of teaching and carefully link this to teachers' pay and professional development. They are fully aware, through their good use of data, of the progress and attainment made by all pupils regardless of their background. This includes having a good understanding of the effect the pupil premium funding is having on eligible pupils. They understand the differences in progress rates between these pupils and their peers in school. The governors carry out their statutory duties effectively and especially those related to safeguarding, so procedures meet requirements. They regularly check the premises and all risk assessments to make sure that everyone in the school is safe and secure. Regular training makes sure that they have the skills and understanding to carry out their duties effectively.

## What inspection judgements mean

School		
Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>



## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	124062
<b>Local authority</b>	Staffordshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	442629

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

<b>Type of school</b>	First
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	3–9
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	156
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Susan Fletcher
<b>Headteacher</b>	Erica Smith
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	8 February 2011
<b>Telephone number</b>	01782 297886
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