

The Reginald Mitchell Primary School

Congleton Road, Butt Lane, Stoke-on-Trent, ST7 1NA

Inspection dates 14–15 October 2014

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement.

- The headteacher and governors have not successfully addressed all the areas of weakness identified from the previous inspection, especially those relating to writing and mathematics.
- For a number of years, too few pupils have attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. Too few of the pupils who left school at the end of Year 6 in 2014 reached the higher levels in writing and mathematics.
- Teachers do not always have high enough expectations of what pupils can achieve. They do not always use information on pupils' performance effectively enough and sometimes set work that is too hard for some groups, and too easy for others.
- Standards in grammar, punctuation, spelling and writing are not improving at a rapid enough rate, and pupils' progress in these subjects is not consistently good in all year groups.
- Pupils have few opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge of calculation to problem-solving activities.
- Subject leaders do not have a good enough grasp of how well different groups of pupils are performing, or of the effectiveness of teaching.
- Governors do not hold the school fully to account. They do not have a good enough understanding of how well groups of pupils are performing, or of how pupils benefit from the primary school sport funding.
- Few opportunities are available for pupils to have first-hand experiences of the cultural diversity evident in Britain.
- Teachers in the early years do not always make accurate assessments of how well children are making progress, or of the skills and knowledge they have learned by the time they enter Year 1.

The school has the following strengths

- Pupils' behaviour is good. They are very welcoming, care about their school and say that they always feel safe. Their attendance is above average.
- The teaching of phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) has improved.
- Pupils' achievement in reading is above average at the end of Key Stage 2.
- Marking has improved. Teachers are increasingly indicating to pupils how they can improve their work.
- The school's work to promote the emotional and social well-being of pupils is good.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed a range of lessons in all year groups, as well as the teaching for small groups of pupils, and sessions aimed at helping pupils to learn to read. Some lessons were jointly observed with the headteacher.
- Inspectors listened to pupils read and held discussions with pupils from across the school. Pupils' work in books was scrutinised during lessons and separately with the headteacher and senior staff.
- Inspectors considered 10 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). Discussions took place with parents at the start of the school day and inspectors took account of the results of the school's surveys of parents' views. A meeting was held with a representative from the local authority and inspectors looked at the responses to a questionnaire completed by 24 members of staff.
- A meeting was held with four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body and its vice-chair.
- A range of school documents were examined. These included records of the school's checks on the quality of teaching, external evaluations of the school's work, the school's review of its own performance, data on pupils' progress, records of pupils' attendance, behaviour records and safeguarding documentation.

Inspection team

Lenford White, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Tracy Stone

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school an average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is average. The proportion of pupils supported through school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is well below average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, is well above the national average.
- Almost all pupils are of white British heritage.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in English and mathematics.
- The school offers a breakfast club and after-school services, both of which are managed by the governing body and were included in this inspection.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
 - ensuring that teachers' have the highest possible expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information to provide activities in class which are set at the just the right level of difficulty so that no one finds their learning too difficult or too easy
 - increasing pupils' confidence so that they find things out for themselves and learn from their mistakes
 - improving the teaching of grammar, punctuation and spelling, and making sure pupils consistently apply these skills to produce good quality writing in all subjects
 - improving pupils' skills and knowledge in calculation and providing more opportunities for them to apply these to solving problems in mathematics.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all subject leaders, the early years manager and the special educational needs coordinator have accurate information on pupils' performance and routinely use this to improve their understanding of the achievement of different groups of pupils' and the effectiveness of teaching
 - making sure that governors develop their understanding of how well pupils are performing and improve their knowledge of the impact of the primary school sport fund so that they can fully hold the school to account
 - making more rigorous checks on teaching that provide clear guidance on how to improve, and setting more challenging targets for teachers
 - providing pupils with more first-hand experiences of the cultural diversity evident in Britain.
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- The work of the headteacher and governors has not been fully effective in ensuring that the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement have been maintained since the previous inspection. As a result, pupils' attainment in writing and mathematics in 2013 was much lower than that of pupils nationally.
- The school has no deputy headteacher or senior leadership structure. Many responsibilities rest solely with the headteacher and this has led to a lack of clarity about the responsibilities of, for example, the teachers responsible for coordination of English and mathematics, the early years manager and the special educational needs coordinator. In particular, information on pupils' performance is not shared with these middle leaders and they are not able to use it routinely to check the attainment and progress of different groups of pupils or the effectiveness of teaching.
- Systems for checking the quality of teaching are not robust enough, and do not provide clear guidance to teachers on how they can be more effective. Targets set for teachers as part of their performance management are not ambitious enough to ensure that all pupils make rapid and sustained progress.
- Staff morale is high. Teachers and teaching assistants want what is best for pupils and do a good job in promoting their social and emotional well-being. Their recent professional development has helped to improve standards in phonics (the link between letters and the sounds they make) and helped to maintain pupils' interest and good performance in reading.
- The school's new curriculum is well on its way to being fully implemented and is effective in engaging pupils' interests. It provides a number of opportunities to broaden pupils' experiences. For example, pupils enjoy learning about the Second World War and about Reginald Mitchell, the designer of the Spitfire, who was born close of the school. Most recently pupils enjoyed a visit from an actor cast as Florence Nightingale who came into school to talk about her life.
- However, pupils do not consistently apply their writing skills in other subjects because teachers do not provide enough opportunities to do this. Similarly, the school's curriculum does not include enough opportunities for them to apply their calculation skills to solving problems in mathematics.
- Most aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Pupils work exceptionally well together. They listen to each other and are used to sharing their thoughts and feelings during circle time. They enjoy going to museums, learning about Shakespeare and playing brass and string instruments. Pupils learn about Christianity and other world faiths such as Islam and Hinduism. However, their knowledge of life in modern Britain is limited because they have few first-hand experiences of meeting people from different cultures.
- The school's well attended breakfast club helps pupils to get off to a good start to the day and to meet and learn with friends. The many after-school clubs available to pupils have helped the school to develop its sporting excellence and to secure national recognition for girls' achievement in cricket.
- The school promotes equality of opportunity well, and fosters good relations among pupils and between pupils and staff. Overall differences between the performance of boys and girls at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2013 were not significantly different from those found nationally, and were narrower than in previous years at the end of Key Stage 1. School data show that the gap between the performance of boys and girls has opened up at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2014 and is wider than that between boys and girls nationally.
- Leaders work effectively to ensure pupils attend school, behave well and are safe. As a result, pupils' attendance is above average. Safeguarding procedures are implemented well and meet statutory requirements.
- The work of the local authority's school improvement service has helped teachers to improve the quality of their marking of pupils' work. However, the local authority view that pupils' performance is good does not

match evidence gained from this inspection.

■ The governance of the school:

- Governors do not fully hold the school to account. They do not have a good enough understanding of how effective teachers are, or of how well pupils are performing. This is because they have not been active enough in insisting that this information is made available.
- Although governors know that the primary school sport fund is spent on gymnastics and athletics, for example, they do not have a good enough understanding of how it promotes the health and well-being of pupils, or of how effective coaches are in improving the skills of staff in teaching sporting activities.
- Governors know how pupils performed in 2013 and have made use of the 'data dashboard' for the school. They know that, in general, pupils' progress needs to be better and that their targets need to be more challenging, but do not know enough about how well pupils perform during the school year or their performance in the 2014 national tests.
- Governors know that the small-group teaching activities and other support offered to disadvantaged pupils are helping to narrow the gap between their performance and that of their class-mates.
- Governors ensure that the headteacher's performance targets are linked to raising pupils' achievement across the school. However, systems for monitoring the headteacher's performance are not as robust as they should be.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Staff, governors and pupils all agree and the school's behaviour logs reveal that the behaviour seen during the inspection is typical.
- Pupils abide by the rules and say that their new code of behaviour works well and that everyone follows the 'golden rules'. They respond quickly to staff instructions, wear their school uniform smartly and greatly appreciate their generous play grounds, fields, pond and adventure play area.
- On the very few occasions when pupils find it difficult to manage their own behaviour they are well supported and soon join in with school activities. They know that they can talk to any member of staff if they have any concerns and are adept at sharing their feelings and emotions.
- Pupils' attendance has improved, and is now above average. Pupils are polite and welcoming and are very proud of their school. They behave sensibly when moving around the school, at lunch time and during breaks.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good.
- Pupils know that bullying is when 'people constantly call you names and fight with you', and say that it rarely, if ever, happens in school. They know that people who break the rules are always 'dealt with' and say that the school fences and cameras make them feel safe.
- Pupils know about most forms of prejudice-based bullying and say that it is wrong to make fun of someone because of what they look like or because of their religion. They say that racism never happens, and that, if it did, it would be taken very seriously.
- Few parents and carers had responded to the online questionnaire, Parent View, but most were of the opinion that their children are safe at school. More representative school questionnaires seeking parents' views indicate that parents feel that their children are happy and well cared for.
- Pupils know that they are at risk of cyber bullying when they use anything that is connected to the internet, including computers and hand-held games. They know not to go into 'chat rooms' and to talk to adults if they are not sure about accessing a website.

- Paramedics, fire-fighters and police officers visit to talk to pupils about staying safe and their 'bike-ability' training helps them to stay safe on roads. They learn about anti-social behaviour as part of their citizenship work.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teachers do not always have the highest possible expectations of what pupils can achieve. Activities in lessons do not always enable them to achieve to the very best of their ability because teachers sometimes set work that is either too hard, or too easy. Consequently, pupils' progress is inconsistent across different year groups and pupils do not always attain as well as they should.
- Pupils are not always sufficiently well equipped, or confident enough, to find things out for themselves and learn from their mistakes. This was evident in a number of mathematics classes in Key Stage 2 where pupils relied on their teachers to help them to round down fractions to their lowest possible form instead of trying to do the work themselves. This also happened when they were asked to double and divide two- and three-digit numbers.
- Also in mathematics, pupils' work throughout both Key Stages 1 and 2 revealed that teachers provide too few opportunities for them to apply their calculation skills and knowledge to problem-solving activities.
- There have been some improvements in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling, but pupils work shows that they do not consistently apply these skills in their writing. Teachers provide too few opportunities for them to practice their writing skills in other subjects.
- The school's recent whole-school approach to teaching writing is beginning to improve pupils' writing skills. At the beginning of a mixed-age session, pupils from Years 2, 3, 4 and 5 were asked to read their work from their previous learning and were very proud to share sentences such as 'my mother was elated when she won the lottery' and 'I felt very dejected when my rabbit died'.
- Teaching assistants are deployed effectively when they work with pupils on different tasks as soon as learning activities commence. This was illustrated well in the Reception class when teaching assistants worked with small groups on a range of writing, reading, computing and hat-making tasks linked to the theme of pirates. However, teaching assistants' time is not always used effectively when they are not directly involved in helping pupils with their learning.
- All pupils' work is marked regularly and their books show increasing evidence that they are taking notice of their teachers' advice, improving their work as a result of it. This is helping pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, to have a better understanding of their learning targets. Subject leaders are beginning to have a greater role in ensuring that work in this area improves and that good practice is shared across the school.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- Children join the Nursery with skills and abilities that are below those typical for their age. Most children, including disadvantaged children, disabled children and those who have special educational needs, quickly gain in confidence and learn to work well with other children. However their speaking and number skills are less well developed and a below-average proportion enter Year 1 with the skills and abilities expected for their age.
- Since the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have declined in Key Stage 1 and pupils' good performance in writing and mathematics in 2012 has not been sustained over the last two years. Too few pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2013, and improvements have not been rapid enough in 2014.
- The proportion of pupils attaining the higher levels in writing and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2014 was well below average.

- Pupils' progress is not consistently good in all year-groups, especially in writing and, in 2014, pupils' attainment in English, grammar, punctuation and spelling by the end of Year 6, though better than in 2013, was below average.
- In 2013, Year 1 pupils were below average in the phonics check and a well below-average proportion achieved the standard when retaking the check in Year 2. This has improved in 2014.
- Pupils enjoy reading books in a wide range of styles. Those who read for inspectors were able to talk in a very informed way about their favourite authors and could name several of their books. Less fluent readers used their phonic skills well to break up, sound out and read unfamiliar words.
- Pupils' progress in mathematics is improving, though it is not consistently good across all year groups. Targets set for pupils in this subject are not as challenging as they should be. However, teachers indicate that their training is helping them to make mathematics more interesting and that extra sessions for pupils and opportunities for them to use interactive mathematics programmes at home are all helping to raise standards.
- The school's new whole-school approach to teaching writing is beginning to improve pupils' performance. However, more opportunities are needed for pupils to develop their writing skills in other subjects.
- In 2013, disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 were about two terms behind their class-mates in reading, writing and mathematics and two terms behind non-disadvantaged pupils nationally. The school's own data show that in 2014 these gaps remain about the same, except in writing where the gap widened slightly.
- The school was not able to provide conclusive data on the performance of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs. However, groups of pupils participating in small-group activities were observed making good progress during the inspection. In 2013 the attainment of these groups of pupils in reading, writing and mathematics was better than that of similar groups of pupils nationally.
- Few pupils attained the higher levels in any subject in 2013. However in 2014 for the first time a very limited number of pupils attained the highest possible Level 6 in mathematics. The most-able pupils in Year 6 said that they enjoyed writing articles and contributing ideas for the school's newsletter.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Leadership and management of the early years provision requires improvement because staff are not using precise enough systems for assessing children's skills in different areas of learning when they enter Nursery. This lack of precision in the school's assessments means that checks on children's progress are not fully reliable.
- Children form good relationships with each other and staff, engage readily in a range of indoor and outdoor activities and behave well. They soon become familiar with routines and are eager to learn new things. As a result they quickly gain in confidence, work and play cooperatively and learn to manage their behaviour well. However the speaking and number skills they need for Year 1 are less well developed.
- This was exemplified in the Nursery where children enthusiastically set about smelling socks and worked together to decide whether what was inside them by comparing the smell with coffee, orange juice, hand-cream and onions.
- Parents who spoke to inspectors said that they are happy with the progress that their children are making. Early years staff visit the homes of all Nursery children and are exploring ways to work better with parents to, for example, continually assess the progress of their children and the skills that they are developing.

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

Unique reference number	124090
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	449299

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	239
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Sue Blood
Headteacher	Alan Stancliffe
Date of previous school inspection	30 November 2010
Telephone number	01782 296778
Fax number	N/A
Email address	headteacher@reginaldmitchell.staffs.sch.uk

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