

Harpfield Primary Academy

Palmers Green, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire, ST4 6AP

Inspection dates

13–14 January 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Outstanding	1
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Outstanding	1
Quality of teaching		Good	2
Achievement of pupils		Good	2
Early years provision		Good	2

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school.

- The headteacher and senior leaders have very high expectations of staff to provide the best possible learning experiences for pupils.
- Leaders at all levels are effective in improving the quality of teaching and committed to continuously raising standards for all pupils.
- Governors know the academy very well and hold the school to account very effectively. With the support of the academy trust, performance is rigorously checked.
- From low starting points, pupils' achievement in writing is outstanding and good in reading and mathematics. All pupils achieve well and some make outstanding progress.
- Teaching is good overall and outstanding in some areas.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are consulted about the curriculum and have numerous opportunities to contribute to how the school is run.
- Pupils are safe in school and feel very well cared for and secure.
- The curriculum is vibrant, creative, exciting and inspires pupils to do their best. It leads to outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school fosters a positive image of literacy and promotes a love of reading.
- Children make a very good start to their life in school in the well-organised and welcoming early years.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- There is not enough outstanding teaching to ensure all pupils make rapid and sustained progress in every subject. There are not yet enough opportunities for staff to observe outstanding practice.
- Occasionally, marking in subjects other than English and mathematics is not as effective.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching in all classes and some small group work where older pupils were having booster sessions and younger pupils were focusing on letters and sounds. They heard pupils reading and attended two school assemblies.
- Inspectors looked at the work in pupils' books in all classes, especially in their writing, mathematics, science and topic books.
- Meetings were held with senior leaders, the vice-chair of the governing body and several other governors, groups of pupils and a representative of the Academy Trust.
- Inspectors gained the views of parents from the 21 responses to Parent View, the Ofsted online questionnaire, and from conversations with parents bringing their children to school.
- The views of staff were gained from the 19 responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at a range of school documents. This included information relating to safeguarding and child protection, development planning, subject planning, tracking information on pupils' progress, performance management systems and procedures for checking on the quality of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Judith Straw, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Steve Rigby

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- Harpfield Academy, sponsored by the Creative Education Academy Trust, converted to an academy school on May 1st 2013. When its predecessor school, Harpfield Primary School, was last inspected by Ofsted it was judged to be satisfactory.
- Harpfield Primary Academy is a smaller-than-average sized primary school.
- Children attend the Nursery every morning.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is in line with the national average.
- All children in the early years attend on a full time basis.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well above average, as is the proportion of pupils who speak English as an additional language. More than 17 languages are spoken in the school.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support is just above the national average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards which are the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.
- An interim headteacher and an acting deputy headteacher took up their posts in September 2014.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, and thereby achievement, so that both are outstanding by ensuring that:
 - the quality of marking is as strong in all subject areas as it is in writing and mathematics
 - staff are given more opportunities to share and learn from the outstanding teaching already evident in the school.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management

are outstanding

- The school has improved rapidly under the inspirational leadership of the interim headteacher and the senior team. Leaders have built on the secure foundation created by the current headteacher's predecessor school. They put the pupils at the heart of everything they do and have a mission to raise the aspirations of all the pupils who pass through the school.
- Every member of staff has high ambitions for the school and is fully committed to the drive for improvement. Staff are proud to belong to the school.
- The academy trust and senior leaders have a very clear vision for the school and understand its strengths and weaknesses still to be addressed. The checking of the quality of teaching is rigorous and has led to teaching which is never less than good and sometimes outstanding.
- Subject leaders are enthusiastic and ambitious. Their development plans are detailed and continually reviewed. Within the plans are precise, measurable targets so that governors and leaders can hold subject leaders to account.
- The leadership of teaching and learning has been central to the school's work since the previous inspection and since the school became an academy. It has brought about significant improvements in pupils' progress and attainment.
- There are some opportunities to share outstanding practice but it is not extended sufficiently to secure outstanding practice as the norm.
- Teachers are held to account for the progress of their pupils through regular progress meetings. Teachers understand that their performance is closely linked to their pay and they appreciate the high quality training and coaching they receive when necessary. The school is able to offer support to other schools in the area.
- The curriculum is developed to reflect the interests and enthusiasm of the pupils. They are consulted about what they want to learn and, after this, the staff develop a unique curriculum for each class which delivers the essential skills but follows pupils' interests. This approach has led to pupils' very positive attitudes towards learning and their enjoyment of school.
- The curriculum is enriched with German, philosophy for children, many clubs, visits and visitors, and specialist music teaching for all pupils.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a key priority for the school and is excellent. Many pupils earn recognition on the role of honour for the Children's university. Pupils are consulted about all aspects of school. Every class has its own charter for behaviour and expectations, and pupils regularly conduct their own self-evaluation of the school. Through the subjects taught and the ethos of the school, pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain and understand traditional British values. This in turn reflects positively on the school's excellent work in establishing good relations and tackling discrimination.
- The funding for those pupils eligible for the pupil premium is targeted well. Additional booster sessions are provided by teachers and teaching assistants, as well as expert music tuition. Numbers of pupils are small but in most year groups all pupils who receive help are doing well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Additional funding for sport is used very effectively so that there are sporting clubs after school for an hour most days. Staff have received extra training to support their teaching of physical education, and pupils are proud of their fitness and awareness of the value of leading a healthy lifestyle.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body is well informed and effective. Governors find out for themselves what is happening in the school through visits and observations of the school at work. They are provided with precise information about the academy's performance so they are able to both support and challenge leaders. The Academy Trust holds school leaders to account for the progress and achievement of all pupils and has made shrewd decisions about staffing and resources to improve the environment for learning. They undertake the performance management of the headteacher. Governors fully understand their specific responsibilities such as safeguarding and ensure that all requirements are fully met. They know how good the teaching is and oversee the performance management of staff. They know how funding is used and check the progress of pupils receiving additional support. The governors are totally committed to ensuring the school provides equal opportunities for every pupil.

The behaviour and safety of pupils

are outstanding

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding. Pupils have a real pride in their school which is demonstrated in the quality of the presentation of their work in English and mathematics, their excellent manners and the way they look after the school environment. The pupils' self-evaluation notice asking 'what is special about our school?' sums up their views. 'We have the best school we could possibly have'. 'We are a team'. 'We take care of our school'. 'You can learn anything you want'.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in the rapidly improving attendance rates and the steep reduction in pupils who are persistently absent.
- Very few incidents of poor behaviour are recorded and the school takes prompt and effective action where necessary. Pupils enjoy each other's company, and playtimes and lunchtimes are friendly and relaxed. The attendance at the after-school clubs, which are held for an hour every day, is high. Pupils enjoy craft activities, many sports, film and gardening clubs and enjoy gaining credits for the Children's University.
- The school is a bright and welcoming place with many books available and a quiet corner in which to read them. There is no litter and the many displays of pupils' work are treated with respect.
- In assemblies behaviour is excellent. Pupils listen, concentrate and participate, and enjoy being part of the large school family. They support different charities, including a school in Uganda. Their understanding of democracy is seen in the detailed minutes of the School Council meetings in which members make sure they are representing the views of all pupils across the school. Every class has its own unique class charter.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is outstanding. Parents are very positive about the care provided for their children. All the responses to Parent View and the views of parents with whom inspectors spoke when they were arriving at the school indicate that families feel their children are safe at school. Pupils and staff agree that all procedures to keep pupils safe are of a high quality.
- Pupils agree there is no bullying and that if it were to happen the school would rapidly stop it. Pupils understand different forms of bullying and discriminatory name calling but insist that it does not happen in this school. They can explain safe rules for using the internet and understand how to keep safe in different situations.

The quality of teaching

is good

- Evidence from observing pupils at work and looking in their books shows that teaching over time is good and some is outstanding. There are elements of outstanding teaching in the early years and in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of what they are trying to achieve because they have individual targets in their books which are broken down into a series of success points which are updated and annotated by teachers over time.
- The teaching of letters and sounds to support early reading is highly effective. As a result, the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standards at the end of Years 1 and 2 is increasing.
- Across the school, teachers plan imaginative activities that excite and motivate pupils to succeed. Teachers also set high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, Year 6 pupils were challenged to compare the opening sentences of books by authors such as Dickens, Lewis Carroll, J.M. Barrie and C.S Lewis. They developed skills in literary criticism by explaining which authors drew them in to want to read more.
- The teaching of reading is a strength of the school. Many strategies are used to motivate and encourage pupils to master reading and, above all, to enjoy it. Teachers are joining with a local authority initiative led by a reading champion. Staff are reading champions themselves for pupils who have less opportunity to read at home. Staff regularly recommend books and talk about their favourite books and there are enticing displays of books in communal areas across the school. Every classroom has a quiet reading area.
- The teaching of mathematics is effective. Teachers put emphasis on problem-solving, reasoning and explaining answers. Literacy and mathematics are further developed by a key skills session at the start of each day.
- The teaching of personal and communication skills is a strength. Pupils who arrive at the school with little or no English are quickly supported, sometimes with specialist teachers, so they are soon able to communicate and take part in the full curriculum. By Year 6 these pupils achieve as well as others in the school.
- Teaching assistants play a crucial role in supporting the learning of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, as well as pupils of middle or lower ability who need some extra support.

Teachers plan work in partnership with their assistants so that all adults are well informed about the aims of each lesson and how to achieve them.

- The quality of teachers' marking across the school in writing and mathematics is exemplary. Teachers are meticulous in ensuring errors are corrected, that all work is completed and that pupils have useful advice on how to improve and develop their work. Teaching assistants are also expert in the marking that they provide for their smaller groups. Pupils are sometimes given extra challenges and a dialogue often builds up as teachers ask and pupils answer questions arising from the marking.
- This high quality marking is not as evident in subjects such as science, religious education and topic work: attention to detail is not as strong, nor are the high expectations for presentation and effort.

The achievement of pupils

is good

- Attainment at the end of Year 6 is improving in all subjects and in 2014 pupils achieved in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress is good in reading and mathematics and outstanding in writing where the proportion of pupils making good progress was twice the national figure. The school's own data shows that this upward trend is set to continue.
- Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been below average for some time but expert teaching is rapidly driving improvement. In 2014 standards in reading, writing and mathematics were all below average at the end of Key Stage 1. However, school tracking data after one term shows a rapid improvement so that pupils are on track to achieve broadly average attainment by the end of the year. The work in their books confirms a higher standard and that learning is gathering pace.
- Pupils of all abilities make good progress through Years 3 to 6 as a result of good and better teaching. In 2014, the proportions making expected progress was higher than national figures but the proportion exceeding expected progress was lower in reading and mathematics. Work in books and teachers' assessments show that the current pupils are on track to make even better progress this year.
- Writing strengths are evident in all classes. Pupils are inspired by creative challenges, such as Year 4 pupils who were writing an exchange of letters between various characters from fairy stories. The exchange between Red Riding Hood and the wolf was especially heartfelt.
- The most-able pupils are motivated by high challenge, extra booster sessions and sometimes support from secondary specialists at nearby schools. As a result, these pupils make good and better progress.
- Disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. They are helped effectively by teachers and teaching assistants who make sure they have the right level of challenge.
- Pupils who speak English as an additional language make rapid progress and by the end of Year 6 are attaining as well as other pupils.
- Disadvantaged pupils who receive additional pupil premium funding attain at a similar level to other pupils in the school. Numbers are small so that the statistics can be different each year. In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were ahead of all pupils nationally in writing by two months, matched national figures in reading and were behind in mathematics by 11 months.
- Pupils' good achievement is evident in a range of subject areas and key skills. Pupils have completed striking artwork in the styles of William Morris, L.S Lowry and Andy Warhol. All pupils learn German and enjoy using conversational German.
- The school's investment in sporting activities has resulted in pupils becoming sports leaders and a high numbers of pupils taking part in sporting activities after school.
- Pupils read daily and enjoy guided reading sessions. They read with reading champions and love to recommend books to each other and to the staff.

The early years provision

is good

- Children start in the Nursery class with skills which are typically below those expected for three-year-olds. This is particularly the case with personal and emotional development, communication and language, numeracy and literacy. They settle quickly into the stimulating and enticing environment and make good progress in all areas of learning so that many reach the early learning goals set for them.
- A significant number of children join the school in the Reception class. These also make good progress with an increasing number reaching the early learning goals.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and to each other are very positive. They work and play well together and

maintain concentration on their tasks for a sustained period of time. They respect each other, adults and their learning environment. Children say 'please' and 'thank you' without being reminded.

- Children who are new to English settle quickly and soon begin to communicate well with the others in class. Adults put a strong emphasis on making sure children speak in full sentences and practise speaking as often as possible.
- Teaching is good because adults move learning along by asking probing questions, setting new challenges and building children's confidence in their own ability to be successful.
- The school is trialling a new electronic assessment system which is starting to be effective, but is not yet embedded. Leaders plan to review this in the near future to make sure that it is providing all the necessary information for an accurate record of children's progress and achievements and highlights where learning is not yet secure.
- Children learn in a calm, purposeful atmosphere indoors and out. Information and communication technology supports learning in mathematics. The outdoor area includes all the areas of learning in a safe and secure environment.
- Children are very safe and well looked after in the early years. This is seen in the confident way that they talk happily to visitors.
- The leader is committed to making the setting the best it can be and the impact of his actions is seen in the improving outcomes for children.

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	138497
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	449805

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	217
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Yvonne Jeffries
Headteacher	Richard Woollacott
Date of previous school inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	01782 234984
Fax number	01782 235240
Email address	enquiries@harpfieldprimaryacademy.org.uk

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