

Somerlea Park Junior School

Bank Street, Somercotes, Alfreton, DE55 4JE

Inspection dates

29–30 April 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- The school has not improved enough since its last inspection.
- For several years, leaders and governors have not ensured that teaching is at least good. Consequently, pupils' achievement, although now improving, has not been good for at least five years.
- Governors, until recently, did not hold the school accountable for pupils' slow progress. This has led to pupils reaching below average standards in reading, writing and mathematics for at least the last five years.
- Leaders spend a great deal of time gathering information on what pupils know and can do, but too little time on taking actions to secure improvements.
- The teaching of reading has been particularly weak. Though it is now improving, teachers still do not make good use of pupils' reading records to identify areas where pupils need help or guidance.
- Leaders and teachers do not always expect enough of the pupils in school. In particular, the work set for more-able pupils is often too easy, and they do not always achieve the standards they are capable of reaching.
- Tasks set by teachers do not always build on pupils' prior learning. As a consequence, there are many lessons where pupils are not challenged enough and do not make enough progress.
- Up to the end of Year 6 in 2014, pupils, and particularly disadvantaged pupils, were poorly prepared for the next stage of their education.

The school has the following strengths

- The governing body has significantly increased the challenge it provides to the school.
- The governors are successfully recruiting a range of external organisations to further improve and extend the range of pupils' learning experiences.
- The appointment of a new deputy headteacher, and the return after leave of the special educational needs coordinator, have strengthened teaching in the mixed age class with Year 4 and Year 5 pupils, and Year 6.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and are very positive about the recent improvements to their school. Their relationships with adults and other pupils in the school are good.
- The curriculum provides many successful opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
- Pupils feel safe. They are well looked after in school. They are courteous and have a good sense of tolerance. They know how to stay safe.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed parts of 23 lessons, three of which were seen jointly with senior leaders. They looked at pupils’ books in several different subjects, including English and mathematics. They heard pupils from Year 3 and Year 4 reading.
- Inspectors spoke with parents, teachers, subject and senior leaders, two governors, and two representatives of the local authority. They held formal and informal meetings with pupils.
- The views of parents were gained from 17 responses to the online questionnaire for parents, Parent View, and through direct conversations with parents before and after school.
- The views of staff were gained through various meetings, and from the six responses to the staff questionnaire.
- Inspectors looked at the school’s records pertaining to: the safeguarding of pupils’ well-being; their attendance and behaviour; the progress made by pupils currently at the school, and by those who had recently left; governing body meetings; the school’s self-evaluation and its development plans; and the school’s monitoring of teaching and learning.

Inspection team

Terry McDermott, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Caroline Pollard

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The number of pupils in each year group varies markedly and complicates the arrangement of classes. There are two separate Year 6 classes, a Year 5 class, a mixed Year 4 and Year 5 class, a Year 4 class, and two separate Year 3 classes.
- The very large majority of pupils are White British.
- The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is above average. The pupil premium is additional funding to support pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or who are looked after.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is below average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- The deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2015. The special educational needs coordinator returned to the school after one year's sabbatical leave.
- The governing body reconstituted in October 2014 and a new Chair and Vice Chair were elected.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' attainment and rate of progress by:
 - all teachers having high expectations for pupils' progress, especially for the most able and the most disadvantaged pupils
 - ensuring that the activities teachers provide for pupils in class are set at just the right level of difficulty to promote the best possible learning for all pupils, including the most able
 - using pupils' reading records to give guidance to parents and other adults on what to do next to help pupils to develop their reading skills.
- Increase the rigour of leadership at all levels, and its impact on pupils' attainment and progress, by:
 - taking prompt and effective action to address identified weaknesses, particularly in respect of disadvantaged pupils
 - providing succinct reports to governors on the impact of these actions on accelerating pupils' progress
 - fully establishing the role of subject leaders in checking more closely on the amount of learning taking place in their subjects.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium 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

- Previously, leadership and management have not ensured that teaching and progress have been good enough to help pupils to achieve well. Insufficient use of regular checks on the work of teachers led to underperformance and lower standards in recent years. However, this is now being addressed through the strong leadership of the new governing body and the appointment of new staff. Although the impact of recent changes is only just beginning to be seen, it has already had a strongly positive impact on the current quality of teaching.
- The previous governing body did not look closely enough at the myriad data that was presented to it, nor did the most senior leaders routinely take action to address the weaknesses that this information pointed out to them. This is the main reason why the school did not improve quickly enough since the last inspection.
- Experienced subject leaders were not trained or required to check on the quality of learning taking place in their subjects throughout the school. Though they have had some opportunities to undertake learning walks and book scrutinies, these have always been paired with a senior leader or external consultant. They have not taken full responsibility for improving learning in the subjects for which they are accountable.
- The school has now correctly focused its efforts on improving teaching and learning in reading, writing and mathematics. The weakest performance has been addressed. There is an increasingly effective system for supporting and challenging teachers to improve their work. Opportunities have been found for teachers to work together but more remains to be done to spread existing good practice more widely. The school's records show that the most rapid learning is in Years 5 and 6.
- There have been opportunities for teachers to work with staff in other schools. This has been of benefit in checking the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work, as has comparing samples of work with these staff.
- Leaders produced an accurate and honest self-evaluation of the school's current performance. This led to a good example of taking action to reduce a weakness. Outside expertise has provided advice and training on the teaching of the key reading skills of inference and deduction. This has had a marked positive impact on pupils' reading and comprehension.
- The school now has a system for teachers to share information on pupils' progress much more easily than was previously the case. The system incorporates methods for assessing and recording how well pupils are progressing in preparation for when national changes are implemented no longer to use National Curriculum levels. Teachers now have a growing understanding of how to use this assessment information when grouping pupils. However, their planning does not yet ensure sufficiently challenging work for all groups in lessons.
- Additional funding for disadvantaged pupils is not used appropriately to support their learning. Governors are not yet able to track its use, or its impact, on pupils' progress. Because of this, there is no evidence that gaps in standards are closing.
- The extra funding the school receives to support sporting activities is used well. It provides pupils with access to good coaching and competitive activities. Their participation rates in healthy activities are good. In addition, teachers are able to work alongside specialists and to learn from them.
- The leadership and management of the school's work with disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs have been reinvigorated with the return to the school of the skilful special educational needs coordinator.

- The school has developed a curriculum which has breadth and balance, but which cannot yet be considered good because it does not allow the pupils to make consistently good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, the school has adopted with enthusiasm, and to good effect, the opportunities presented by the new curriculum for practically based and themed learning. Pupils say they like doing practical things and these help them to learn better.
- The school ensures pupils' good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. British values are promoted well through a range of activities that emphasise the importance of tolerance, understanding and respect. This ensures that good relationships are continuously fostered and there is no discrimination. However, because disadvantaged pupils do not make as much progress or reach as high standards as other pupils, the school does not promote equality of opportunity well enough.
- The local authority has worked closely with the school since 2008 but did not always ensure that its advice was acted upon, or that barriers to improvement were removed. Its more recent work with the school has increased in effectiveness.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - The governing body reconstituted in October 2014. Governance of the school is now good. Under the skilful leadership of the new and highly committed Chair and Vice-Chair, governors have been able to gain a clear picture of what needs to be improved. They have begun energetically and effectively to ensure that teaching improves so that it accelerates achievement and raises standards.
 - Governors have used their skills well to: help the school develop a new system to check and record the amount of pupils' learning; ensure that safeguarding and related health and safety arrangements are in order and meet statutory requirements; refine the school's systems for tackling underperformance, and rewarding only good practice in leadership and in the classroom; and raise funds and resources from external sources to support and help accelerate learning.
 - Governors are fully aware of how the school is underperforming in relation to other schools nationally because they now probe deeply and perceptively into the information provided by the headteacher. They ensure that teacher's pay rises are tied to the progress pupils make. However, they are also aware of their limitations. They are well aware of the underperformance of disadvantaged pupils, and say they would welcome suggestions from an external review of the school's use of the additional funding provided to support these pupils.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils have positive attitudes learning. They say they enjoy lessons and they talk with pleasure about what they have found out. They listen carefully to guidance from adults, and follow instructions closely. They usually respond well to adults' questions and prompts in teachers' marking.
- Pupils' books are well looked after, with no graffiti and almost no scribbling. The very large majority of pupils take pride in doing their best.
- Pupils' behaviour on the playgrounds at break times and lunchtimes is often exemplary. Pupils are calm and affable with each other. They are sensible and sensitive. They do not disturb the activities of other groups of pupils.
- Pupils' conduct in lessons is good and they usually work collaboratively and supportively, even when not directly supervised. Occasionally, when the work set by teachers is too easy, pupils sometimes lose interest and get fidgety.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Safe practices are always to the forefront of the school's activities.
- Pupils feel safe around the school and in lessons. They are confident of adult support if they need it, and

know that staff will take their concerns seriously.

- Pupils know what bullying is, and know that it is unfair. They say there is very little bullying in school. They learn about the many types of bullying, including homophobic and racist name-calling. They know that these are unacceptable forms of discrimination which have to be eliminated. They respect each other's different viewpoints, faiths and cultures. They know what to do if they come across any form of bullying, and are confident that adults would deal with this quickly and firmly.
- Staff ensure that pupils learn about staying safe through discussions in assemblies, and through specifically planned taught topics during lessons.
- Pupils are very aware of the dangers of the internet. They confirm that the school 'is always reminding us' of how to stay safe when using electronic media.
- Attendance rates have been below national averages for several years. They have improved over the past year to be broadly at the national average because the school is being more assertive in following up absences.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Teaching requires improvement because it has not improved since the last inspection. Over time, it has not helped pupils to learn enough in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Teaching, though clearly now improving under the active and effective guidance of the new deputy headteacher, is not yet consistently good throughout the school. This is why pupils are not making consistently good progress.
- At times, work is not as challenging as it might be for the most-able pupils. This is obvious in pupils' books when all the examples completed are correct. In addition, it is sometimes apparent that all pupils in the class have been set the same task regardless of their abilities or of what they already know and can do. In these circumstances, the work is too easy for the more-able pupils and too hard for the less-able pupils.
- The teaching of reading is improving, especially since the school began its 'Inference' initiative, a programme which specifically helps pupils to 'read between the lines' of piece of text. Pupils say that this is helping them to understand better the deeper meanings of different pieces of text. However, pupils' reading records are used merely to list when pupils have been heard reading. They are not used to specify what help or encouragement a pupil might need; for instance, in comprehending the meaning of particular words. They do not, therefore, help pupils to increase their reading skills quickly enough.
- The teaching of writing is now good because pupils in all classes have many opportunities to write about things they have directly experienced, especially during practically based topic work. This was confirmed by Year 4 pupils carrying out land-based sculptures in the style of Andy Goldsworthy. They explained how they could only use the resources they could find outdoors, and were excited by the possibilities of describing their artistic creations in their books.
- The marking of pupils' work has been a recent whole-school focus for improvement, though its use is not yet consistent across the school. Where learning is strongest and most rapid, the feedback offered to pupils through marking is used to extend their learning very effectively. When teachers pose questions in mathematics books such as 'Please can you give another example of...' or 'Please explain how you might...', pupils often write detailed answers of several well-constructed sentences. This deepens their understanding of mathematical concepts and processes. The teaching of mathematics is now good, though the full impact of this new way of marking has yet to be measured through the national tests.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well throughout the school. They give focused help or supervision to pupils of different abilities, not merely the less able. They often use questioning well to check understanding and probe pupils' thinking.

The achievement of pupils**requires improvement**

- Pupils' progress, including that of disadvantaged pupils, from their different starting points in reading, writing and mathematics has been slow, though it is now improving. In 2014, at the end of Year 6, standards in writing were average but attainment was well below average in mathematics and reading. In reading, pupils left the school more than a year behind pupils nationally. These weak results were due to previously weak teaching and leadership.
- Since the governing body was reconstituted, progress has accelerated across the school and standards have begun to rise, rapidly so in reading. Under the current leadership, these very necessary improvements are being urgently and vigorously addressed. Though there is still a legacy of past underachievement, it is shrinking in each year group in the school.
- The school's accurate and reliable measurements of what pupils know and can do indicate that current Year 6 pupils are already well ahead of the previous Year 6 in reading, and ahead in mathematics and in writing, albeit from a higher starting point. There is not the same wide variance in performance between reading, writing and mathematics that was seen in 2014.
- In 2014, the gap in attainment at the end of Year 6, between disadvantaged pupils and their classmates was about three terms in reading, two terms in writing and almost nothing in mathematics. Compared to other pupils nationally, disadvantaged pupils were five terms behind in reading, two terms behind in mathematics and one term behind in writing. Though these pupils' progress is being tracked carefully throughout the school, the gaps are not closing as fast as they should. This is because the additional funding is not always being directed at supporting those who need it most, and sometimes it is not being spent at all.
- Too few of the most-able pupils made more than expected progress in reading and mathematics in 2014. However, the school's latest information shows a greater proportion are already reaching higher standards and making more than expected progress in these subjects this year. In writing, a high proportion of more-able pupils made better than expected progress.
- With the return of the special educational needs coordinator, good leadership of the provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has ensured that these pupils are now making good progress. This is because they receive expert support, organised in a flexible way to meet their different learning needs, both within and outside lessons.

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	112498
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	462016

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

Type of school	Junior
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	7–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	168
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Paul Williams
Headteacher	Karen Joyce
Date of previous school inspection	30 Apr 2013
Telephone number	01773 602258
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