

Earl Sterndale CofE Primary School

Earl Sterndale, Buxton, SK17 0BS

Inspection dates 19–20 May 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Good	2
	This inspection:	Good	2
Leadership and management		Good	2
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
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 school is well led. This means the staff work well together as an effective team. There is a good focus on improving teaching and ensuring the school continues to move forwards.
- The headteacher checks teaching in the classrooms and has an accurate understanding of what makes teaching successful and where improvements can be made. This has a positive impact on learning.
- From their different starting points, pupils make good progress and achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils' behaviour in and out of lessons is consistently good. Pupils get on very well with each other and say 'school is like being part of a big family'.
- The school keeps pupils safe. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe. They know what bullying is and are confident there is always someone to listen to any concerns they may have.
- The quality of teaching is good. Improvements in the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make) are having a positive impact on standards in reading.
- Provision for children in the early years is good. They settle well and are eager to learn.
- Governance is effective. Governors are developing their role well by asking increasingly searching questions of school leaders.
- Links with parents are effective. Parents are pleased with the quality of care and education provided. They believe the school is a happy and caring place for their children to enjoy learning.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- Neat handwriting and correct spelling, grammar and punctuation do not have a high enough priority. Consequently, pupils' work contains inaccuracies and is sometimes untidy.
- The work teachers set is sometimes too easy or too hard and this slows progress.
- Classrooms do not always provide a stimulating place to learn.
- Leaders' checks on aspects of pupils' work, in their books, are not rigorous enough to identify all areas for improvement.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector observed learning in parts of six lessons and saw a range of other activities. Some of the learning observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. The inspector also looked in detail at the work in pupils' books and heard several pupils read.
- The inspector held planned and informal discussions with pupils throughout the inspection.
- There were discussions with the headteacher and with the early years leader.
- The inspector spoke to members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspector considered the 14 responses to the parent questionnaire (Parent View). She also spoke to several parents at the start of the inspection and took account of four responses to the staff questionnaire.
- The inspector scrutinised a number of documents, including the school's own information about pupils' learning and progress. She also took account of documents and records relating to behaviour, attendance and safeguarding.

Inspection team

Sue Hall, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- This is a much smaller than average-sized primary school.
- Children attend the Reception group as full time pupils.
- All pupils are of White British heritage and speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils who enter or leave the school roll other than at the usual points is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, who are supported by additional funding (the pupil premium), is below the national average. The pupil premium is for those pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals and those children who are looked after by the local authority.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above the national average.
- There are two classes in the school. Both cover a mixed age range. Pupils work in either the Reception and Key Stage 1 class or in the Key Stage 2 class.
- Last year three staff shared the role of teaching the younger pupils. In September a new member of staff took on this role full time.
- The school is in the middle of a building project and currently has no kitchen or dining area, which was also used as a base for some activities for the early years children.
- Due to the very small number of pupils in the school, it is not appropriate to compare performance with the government's floor standards (the minimum standards expected in reading, writing and mathematics by Year 6), without potentially identifying individuals.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Accelerate the rate of progress made by:
 - ensuring that pupils are taught to write neatly, with correct grammar, punctuation and spelling
 - checking that work for each individual is not too easy or too hard
 - improving the environment in some classrooms to make sure they are vibrant and stimulating, and contribute more effectively to pupils' learning.
- Extend the monitoring of the quality of teaching to include a review of pupils' work to ensure all areas for improvement are identified and speedily addressed.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management are good

- Leaders have maintained and developed a culture where pupils of all abilities grow in confidence, behave well and make good progress. The headteacher provides effective leadership that is focused successfully on continuing to raise the achievement of pupils of all ages and abilities.
- A recent focus on improving the quality of teaching, particularly for the younger pupils, has had a positive impact. Joint lesson observations with the headteacher show that he has an accurate grasp of what works well and what remains to be improved in teaching across the school.
- The headteacher is well supported by other staff who readily share the many responsibilities of middle leadership in this very small school. This ensures that the development priorities chosen are dealt with effectively. Leadership of the early years has improved this year and provision for these children is good in all areas.
- The school benefits from its work with a group of other very small schools. The headteacher and staff visit other settings, for example to discuss changes to assessment procedures and curriculum developments. Staff have the opportunity to attend training activities and share and observe good practice.
- Staff make appropriate checks of the progress pupils make. The school is trialling new assessment processes and has an accurate understanding of the progress made by individual pupils.
- The school provides a range of subjects and activities that reflect national guidance. The curriculum successfully focuses upon developing key skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This helps prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education. For example, following a weakness identified in teaching phonics (the sounds letters make) in 2014, an increased focus for the younger pupils, on developing phonics knowledge is having a significant impact on progress.
- The school's promotion of pupils' understanding of British values is developed through activities including those that also help develop their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Tolerance and respect for others with different beliefs is encouraged through discussions, theme days and visits, for example to a local cathedral and Sikh temple and a day celebrating festivals of light which included a talk by a member of the Jewish faith. Further plans include work on the rule of law through a study of the *Magna Carta* and the development of democracy.
- Links with parents are strong. All of the parents spoken to note that staff, including those in administrative roles, know and care for their children very well. They believe that staff go out of their way to share information with them including how their children settle to school and when they move onto secondary education. All of the parents who responded to the inspection questionnaire would recommend the school to others.
- Leaders carry out observations in the classroom as part of a programme to manage teachers' performance, but other monitoring activities such as the scrutiny of pupils' work in books are not focused sufficiently on ensuring expectations are high enough in terms of handwriting, grammar, punctuation and spelling. This means these aspects are not a priority and are not as well developed as they could be.
- In some parts of the school classrooms lack variety and stimulation. There is no indication that this is adversely affecting the progress pupils make, but this does little to inspire pupils to produce their best work.
- The local authority provides good support to the school. This includes an increasingly effective focus on monitoring the impact of teaching including through lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils work. Records of discussions show these accurately identify strengths and weaknesses in provision, reflecting those identified in the inspection, and pinpointing where improvements can be made.
- The school carries out checks to ensure the suitability of staff to work with children and currently fulfils all

statutory safeguarding requirements. Staff training to safeguard the pupils is up to date. Policies are reviewed appropriately.

- The school uses pupil premium funding well to support the progress and development of the pupils. Additional individual support is provided as appropriate. Leaders monitor the impact of this support which ensures that progress accelerates for any pupil for whom the funding applies. This illustrates the school's commitment to ensuring equality of opportunity for all and in countering possible discrimination of any kind.
- The primary school physical education and sport funding is used effectively. The school has prioritised the development of skills in outdoor and adventurous activities including climbing and mountain biking. As a result, pupils develop healthy life-styles. They speak with enjoyment about regular visits to a local outdoor centre where they have particularly liked rock climbing. Such activities help overcome the limitations of the school accommodation and facilities.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governance of the school is effective. The very recent change in leadership of the governors is being managed well. The governing body contains a mix of experienced and new governors. Governors have undertaken training to help ensure they are in a more informed position to develop their role in challenging school leaders about what is provided for the pupils. They have an understanding of what the data tell them about progress in the small cohorts. They are informed about the quality of teaching and the links between performance management procedures and teachers pay. Several visit school regularly and are well informed of the day-to-day working of the school.
 - Governors are forward looking and keen to develop their role further through more regular meetings that focus on particular areas. They recognise that some school procedures have been informal and the checks they have carried out have sometimes lacked critical rigour. When shortcomings are identified they are acted upon with clear determination to fully address the issues.

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are friendly to each other. Boys and girls get on well together and with those of different ages. This is reflected in the playground when older boys happily turn the skipping rope for other pupils. It is also seen when eating lunch in the adjoining Church, where those of different ages sit and chat happily together, including an absorbing discussion about sheep.
- Pupils are eager to learn. In question–and–answer sessions, most older pupils are happy to share their ideas with others, including how to work out difficult mathematical problems. Younger pupils also readily take turns, for example in reading out cards with 'ar' words on and checking their partner's answers.
- The work in younger pupils' books show they try hard to improve their work and produce increasingly more detailed stories. The work in older pupils' books is not always presented neatly. This indicates that not all pupils take enough care with this aspect of their work or see this as important.
- Attendance and punctuality have improved during the year and are now in line with national averages.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their friends safe. They recognise in the small playground and with no soft landing surfaces their behaviour can have an impact on the safety of others.
- Pupils have a good understanding of what bullying is. They readily identify the benefits and possible dangers of social media and issues of e-safety. Pupils found the recent visit by staff from the child protection charity, Childline, of interest, and believe they understand issues connected to bullying more readily. They recognise that poor behaviour would never be tolerated in school and there are people to talk to should they have any worries.

- All of the parents spoken to during the inspection believe the school is a happy and caring community. They expressed no concerns about behaviour or bullying.
- Safeguarding procedures have recently been improved and are implemented effectively. Any unexplained absence is quickly followed up, and careful checks made on all visitors to the school.

The quality of teaching is good

- The scrutiny of work in pupils' books, data about progress and lesson observations confirm the school's own view that teaching is good for all age groups. Records show this has improved during the last year, particularly in Key Stage 1. Teaching has a positive impact on learning and achievement including in reading, writing and mathematics.
- All teaching and support staff have strong working relationships with the pupils. They encourage and praise everyone's efforts in a wide range of academic and social activities. This has a very positive impact on pupil's confidence and enthusiasm to find things out and to learn.
- Staff plan interesting activities that often contain a practical or fun element to learning. For example, the teaching of reading was effective for the older pupils. They made good progress in understanding the key elements of a text by reading aloud parts of a play script. Because they have enjoyed the story of *The Hobbit* and were familiar with the characters, this enabled them to draw on their prior knowledge effectively and produce perceptive, quite dramatic and amusing accents and actions for their characters.
- The marking of pupils work has improved during the year. This is now good and clearly identifies to pupils what they have done well and the next steps they have to take to improve their work further. This improved practice is leading to prompt improvements in pupils' work. However, these improvements have yet to have a full impact on pupils' spelling, punctuation and grammar.
- Teaching assistants are effective when working within class or individually with pupils. This ensures that the work set for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs meets their needs well. Disadvantaged pupils entitled to support from the pupil premium are also supported successfully with discussions with their families helping to identify what support is most appropriate for the most-able pupils.
- Staff working with the younger pupils plan a good range of activities that are usually appropriately challenging. For example, when learning more about the sound 'ar', older ones used word cards that they read aloud to a partner who had to decide how the word was spelt. During this time, younger or less confident pupils painted simpler words onto the playground. This helped to reinforce their understanding of how to blend the letters together to make the sound.
- While the level of challenge for pupils is good overall there are occasional inconsistencies. The teaching of mathematics in Year 6 was effective because work set for these older pupils is challenging with, for example, regular but quite difficult mental mathematics tests. These encourage the pupils to use what they already know about mathematics to solve a wide range of problems. However, the same work is often set for younger pupils in the mixed-age class. In discussion they say 'it's too hard' and leads them to say mathematics is their least favourite subject. Very occasionally work for Key Stage 1 pupils on numbers to 20 is too easy for some of them.
- Work for the younger pupils is organised well and enables easy tracking of progress. The work in older pupils' books though is often untidy, undated and untitled. This makes it more difficult to use for assessment purposes.

The achievement of pupils is good

- Children enter the school with a wide range of early learning experiences. Their abilities vary considerably from year to year but are broadly typical for their age. Observations and the school's own data show that

children in the Reception group make good progress and are well prepared for Year 1.

- School records and the sample of pupils work show that from their different starting points, and including those who join the school at other than the usual start times, pupils make good overall progress. Pupils of all abilities achieve well in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils generally read well. Younger pupils benefit from recently improved work in teaching them how to blend letters together to make other sounds and how to segment or 'karate chop' some words to work out what they say. Older pupils do not read as regularly to an adult in school. While they read accurately, their comprehension skills are sometimes less secure.
- The content of pupils writing is often good. They write quite imaginatively and produce lengthy pieces that show good depth and detail. A recent development has been for older pupils to write about their work in physical education. This interests the pupils and helps them develop a good technical vocabulary when for example using carabineer when writing about climbing. However, pupils' books show that work is often untidy, and spelling, punctuation and grammar are variable.
- Pupils have a good understanding of numbers and shape, space and measures. They use appropriate operations to make calculations. Pupils solve mathematical problems effectively, but again, weak presentation makes the checking of progress difficult.
- Disadvantaged pupils make good overall progress and reach standards that are sometimes above their classmates and close to other pupils nationally. There are too few of these pupils to compare their attainment specifically, without potentially identifying them. Additional funds are used to provide support, including in reading. This ensures these pupils read more regularly to an adult.
- The most-able pupils make the same progress as others in the school. Work for the most-able pupils is under review to ensure expectations are high enough, for example, in their understanding of grammar, punctuation and spelling.
- The school provides effective support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs in their academic and personal development. This leads to them making good progress and achieving well.

The early years provision

is good

- Discussions with staff and school data indicate that children enter the school with skills and experiences that vary widely from year to year. Parents indicate their children settle happily. Records show that they make good overall progress in all areas including their personal and social development. There are improvements this year in teaching phonics that has raised previously weaker performance in reading and writing. Children are well prepared for moving to Year 1.
- Observations of a range of activities show that children's behaviour is good and they develop positive attitudes to their learning. This is shown in quite wet weather when working outside where they patiently waited for their turn to recognise a word, then rolled a ping pong ball down a chute into a basket. Occasionally, they become a little over excited when putting numbers in order or when using pieces of apparatus to make 10 which affected the accuracy of their work.
- Children are currently kept safe and secure. Discussion with parents shows that the children feel safe and particularly enjoy playtimes and lunch with the older pupils.
- The sample of children's work throughout the year shows that teaching and learning are consistently good. The checks of progress are regular and information is used well to provide a good level of challenge matched to the children's different abilities. Individuals work with others of similar ability, for example, the most-able children sometimes work with older pupils. Disabled children and those with special educational needs make good progress because work is carefully tailored to help them do well and they are provided with good support.

- Leadership and management of the early years are good. Staff are trained well and experienced in working with mixed-age groups. They ensure the needs of those in the early years are considered carefully. The current accommodation is severely limited by the recent removal of the adjoining room where the early years children often worked. There is currently no direct access to outdoor activities. This is a temporary measure during building works. While the adjoining Church is used well, the current situation limits the opportunity to provide a vibrant and stimulating range of learning for the 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	112821
Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	461616

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary controlled
Age range of pupils	4–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	28
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Lynne Hodgkinson (Acting Chair)
Headteacher	Daniel Holden
Date of previous school inspection	16 January 2012
Telephone number	01298 83263
Email address	headteacher@earlsterndale.derbyshire.sch.uk

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