

Castlechurch Primary School

Tennyson Road, Stafford ST17 9SY

Inspection dates 12–13 January 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Require improvement
Early years provision	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Inadequate

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The rates of progress and standards attained by disadvantaged pupils remain below other pupils nationally and in school. The gap is closing but not quickly enough.
- Too few pupils make better than expected progress by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Pupils are not always given enough opportunities to deepen their knowledge across a broad range of subjects.
- Teaching in the early years, while improving, remains too variable. Weaker aspects of teaching have not improved securely enough.
- Teachers' expectations of children in the early years are not consistently high.
- Planned tasks in the early years do not sufficiently take account of what the children already know and can do.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher, senior leaders and governors provide good leadership. They are clear about the school's priorities and ensure that their expectations are supported well by effective training and appropriate expertise.
- Governors are highly proactive, well informed and ambitious for the school's ongoing improvement.
- Leaders regularly check on pupils' progress and assess how well pupils are taught and supported. They quickly identify where improvements are stalling and why.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to further improvement. They have secure subject knowledge and they make sure learning is purposeful, well paced and interesting.
- Teachers accurately check on pupils' understanding. They use this information well to plan or amend future learning.
- Pupils are a credit to the school. They are polite, well behaved and show high levels of care for each other.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to their learning. They know what they have to do and why. They are unafraid to get things wrong but have the confidence to persist and find solutions for themselves.
- Pupils not only understand the principles of British values, they live them every day.

Full report

In accordance with section 13(4) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector is of the opinion that the school no longer requires special measures

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Close the gap in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and their peers by
 - accelerating their progress in all subjects
 - identifying their specific learning needs
 - providing specific timely support and
 - reviewing their progress regularly.

- Improve the teaching in the early years so that it is consistently good by
 - raising teachers' expectations of what young children can do
 - providing purposeful activities which develop children's knowledge, skills and understanding across the areas of learning
 - setting suitably challenging tasks for the most-able children.

- Enrich pupils' experience of the wider curriculum by
 - providing opportunities for pupils to develop and apply skills, extend their knowledge and deepen their understanding across a range of subjects.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

is good

- The headteacher's expectations of staff are clear, well communicated and well understood. All planned improvements reflect the most important priorities. New ideas are encouraged and supported by appropriate expertise and resources. Pupils' contributions are welcomed and suitable actions are taken in response.
- The deputy headteacher ensures that training for staff is frequent and pertinent for their combined or individual development. Staff are encouraged to visit other schools and share the good practice observed. Recent 'Prevent' training strengthened all staff members' awareness of the different types of radicalisation and the risks within the local and wider community.
- Senior leaders ensure that each year group covers the right breadth of subjects over the year. Additional time is given occasionally to concentrate in more depth on aspects of art or design and technology. A range of specialists provide music and instrumental lessons. During the inspection, a group of pupils performed at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham. The curriculum is further enhanced by additional after-school clubs.
- Senior leaders regularly check on pupils' progress and the effectiveness of the additional support provided for pupils. Leaders are able to identify where pupils' progress is stalling and why.
- The coordinator for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs closely monitors the effectiveness of the support provided. She successfully introduced new procedures and helped staff to quickly take on additional levels of responsibility. The coordinator ensures that the right level of expertise is available where the need is identified and substantiated.
- Leaders manage teachers' performance effectively and keep a suitably clear focus on improving teaching skills. Leaders identify relative strengths and areas for future development, and link them with whole-school priorities. Staff salaries are now closely aligned with their level of responsibility and experience.
- The PE and sport premium is used effectively to increase teachers' knowledge of pupils' physical development and sporting skills. Advanced training is provided for teachers to a specialist level. The funding helps the school to provide additional sporting experiences such as basketball and bubble football. Additional sports club activities and competitive sporting events are also arranged; for example, inter-school swimming galas and cricket tournaments.
- Pupil premium funding is spent effectively to provide additional support for individuals or groups of pupils. Teachers and teaching assistants know the pupils well. They adjust timetables and plan events to help pupils develop specific skills or raise their confidence in certain aspects of their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants plan together to make best use of their combined expertise. The effectiveness of the support is checked every three to six weeks and further expertise is drawn in where pupils fail to make the necessary progress. Parents are increasingly supported, trained and involved in helping their children at home. Nevertheless, some of the older pupils have much to catch up on because of their prolonged underachievement in the past.
- Pupils' knowledge of life in modern Britain and their awareness of British values are evident in their day-to-day behaviours, attitudes and principles. Pupils spoke knowledgeably about the election process, democratic decision making and fundamental respect for those of different faiths and beliefs. The pupils' appreciation for individual liberty underpins their charitable work and contributes significantly to their understanding of different communities.
- The school has appropriate policies and procedures in place to keep children safe. The school has the safety and welfare of children as its highest priority. All staff know the pupils well. They are acutely aware of indications of neglect or abuse in a range of forms. They are clear about how to report and follow up concerns. Investigations are conducted without delay and the expertise of external agencies is used well to provide relevant and specific support for individuals and families. Open channels of communication ensure everyone acts in the best interests of the child.
- The local authority has gradually withdrawn its previous support as the school grew in confidence and developed skills from within. Local authority representatives know the school well and recognise that 'the school has moved miles'.

■ The governance of the school

- As one member of staff explained, 'Governors are now drivers of our school not just passengers.'
- Governors are highly proactive, well informed and fully involved in recent strategic initiatives.
- They are clearly focused on doing what is best for the pupils.
- The governing body has reconstituted and acted upon the necessary improvements identified in the review of governance. They have established a clear and accountable committee structure.
- Governors seek information for themselves and they have a keen sense of 'the right' priorities.
- Governors are a core element of the school's current ambition. They strive for ongoing improvement and are unafraid to challenge wherever necessary.

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

is good

- As one teacher explained, 'Teachers' enthusiasm is infectious. We have a strong team spirit which is fundamental to our improved progress.'
- Teachers have suitable expectations of pupils. Their secure subject knowledge, particularly in reading and writing, is evident in their explanations and questioning.
- Pupils make progress over time because the set tasks in lessons and homework help them to practise, develop and apply what they have learned. Learning is purposeful and well paced so that pupils' interest is inspired and their attention maintained. Pupils are unafraid to get things wrong but they are keen to find solutions. They show a genuine interest in their learning.
- Teachers regularly and accurately check on pupils' understanding and progress. In lessons, tasks are well planned to broaden pupils' knowledge and deepen their understanding. Additional support is provided where necessary.
- Teachers teach, demonstrate and insist on the use of subject-related words so that pupils can explain their understanding in their speaking and writing. For example, a Year 1 pupil correctly identified and exclaimed, 'That's a double consonant!' Teachers frequently seize and develop pupils' ideas so that skills can be shared, practised and developed. Displays around school and pupils' books provide a range of evidence for pupils' increasingly imaginative and precise vocabulary choices. Specific reading and writing skills are occasionally taught at a point in the morning and then applied later in a different lesson. This practice helps the pupils understand why these skills have to be mastered.
- Reading has a high priority in the school day. Pupils learn, develop and apply phonics skills so they can quickly break down and read unfamiliar words. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' reading. They plan lessons and a variety of occasions for pupils to build their reading skills sequentially and securely. All adults work together closely to ensure they consistently and accurately model sounds and provide a range of opportunities for pupils to apply their skills. Reading areas in each classroom are inviting and many display information about authors or draw attention to particular types of stories or books.
- Mathematical concepts and skills are taught incrementally over time. Pupils cover a lot of work to improve their accuracy and develop their understanding. Set tasks quickly develop in complexity to make pupils think and consider how mathematics can be applied to everyday life. Pupils increasingly appreciate the importance of mathematics. They are equally confident to ask for help or persevere. Pupils typically persist, concentrate, remain alert throughout lessons and learn from each other.
- Teachers' checks on how well their pupils are doing are regular and appropriate for the age of pupils they teach. Their day-to-day knowledge of what pupils can and cannot do helps teachers to amend future lessons accordingly.
- The school adopted a new assessment system in September last year. Teachers refer frequently to the end-of-year expectations to plan the next steps in learning. Gaps in pupils' knowledge or understanding are quickly identified and addressed. As a consequence, the rates of pupils' progress are showing signs of improvement across subjects.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare **is good**

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All pupils have positive attitudes to their learning because adults' expectations of them are clear, pupils' effort is praised and, in most cases, pupils understand the purpose of each set task. As a consequence, pupils know what they have to do and why. Pupils work cooperatively in pairs or small groups but can also work individually for extended periods of time.
- Pupils look out for each other. They notice when someone appears to be lonely, sad or upset during school breaks and lunchtimes and, without prompting, show kindness and help. They show mutual respect for other pupils whatever their age or background.
- Pupils develop a knowledge and appreciation of other people's beliefs, cultures and traditions in lessons and visits to places of worship. They are encouraged to reflect on their own beliefs, religious or otherwise, that inform their views on life in and out of school. Pupils who spoke to inspectors said, 'It doesn't matter what people look like or where they come from, we're all the same.'
- Castlechurch pupils have a strongly developed moral culture. They have a keen sense of right and wrong. They understand that the rules are made for their safety and, as a result, they feel valued.
- Pupils are aware of the different types of bullying but asserted that bullying at Castlechurch was rare and dealt with promptly when reported to adults.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe and staff provide regular updates to keep pupils' understanding fresh. They learn how to ride bicycles safely, how to be careful pedestrians and what steps to take to keep themselves safe online. The pupils know the different types of media and how to deal with a range of concerns.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils of all ages are polite and have well-developed social skills. They work together well in pairs or groups and support each other in their learning tasks.
- No incidents of poor or inappropriate behaviour were seen during the inspection. The log of behaviour incidents is kept up to date but only minor misdemeanours occur. On the rare occasion when a more serious event occurs, adults take immediate and appropriate action. Incidents of exclusion are now rare.
- All pupils spoken with were aware of healthy lifestyles and eating. Pupils contribute well to improvements in school and are invited to identify where things could be better. A group of pupils asked if they could speak to the school meals provider to share their concerns about choice and portions. Their feedback was taken on board and the quality and quantity of school dinners improved.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection. It is now in line with the most recently published national figures. Persistent absence has reduced because of the actions taken to work with the families involved.

Outcomes for pupils **require improvement**

- In 2015, standards attained by disadvantaged pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6 remained below other pupils nationally and in school.
- Disadvantaged pupils did not make the rates of progress expected of them by the end of Year 6. The gap in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and others, particularly in upper Key Stage 2, remains a challenge for the school.
- Few pupils made more than expected progress by the end of Years 2 and 6 in 2015.
- During the time the school required special measures, staff focused sharply on improving pupils' standards of reading, writing and mathematics. Opportunities for pupils to transfer literacy skills to other subjects are evident in their books. However, teachers have not consistently ensured that pupils investigate, enquire, interrogate, research or observe in a range of other subjects.
- In the 2015 assessments and tests, pupils attained average standards by the end of Years 2 and 6.
- The progress and attainment of the most-able pupils in Year 6 were in line with the national figures.
- Pupils are increasingly aware of the variety of writing purposes and styles. They draft and improve the writing skills they have learned, for example descriptions of surroundings from a character's point of view.

They practise persuasive language when writing leaflets about places they have visited or write investigative accounts of local incidents such as a recent fire. They take care to present their work accurately and they apply these skills when writing in other subjects.

- Pupils read more for enjoyment and information and speak knowledgeably about the different styles of books and authors they like. Pupils use their phonics knowledge effectively to read unfamiliar words and correctly recognise words that have common spelling patterns. Pupils understand what they read, appreciate characters' feelings and actions and plausibly predict what might happen next.
- Pupils are making good progress in their reading from their different starting points. The focus on reading is making a significant difference to pupils' achievement. Most pupils in Years 1, 2 and 4 have a reading age in line with or close to their chronological age. Pupils in Years 3, 5 and 6 still have some catching up to do.
- Pupils with disabilities and those who have special educational needs are making good progress in reading, with many in Years 1, 2 and 4 meeting expectations for their age. A growing proportion of pupils are catching up with their classmates in a range of subjects. The support provided for them either individually or in groups has made a significant difference to the pupils' achievement.
- Pupils cover a good range of mathematical concepts and skills over time. Their books show a good level of accuracy in calculation appropriate for their age. They are developing a suitable understanding of place value, fractions, decimals, shape and angles. Pupils have less experience of measure and applying reasoning to solve mathematical problems.
- The majority of children in the early years achieved good levels of development by the end of the Reception year in 2015. Particular strengths emerged in reading and writing where the proportion of Castlechurch children achieving a good level of development was much higher than national figures.
- Almost all Year 1 pupils met the standard in the phonics check in 2015. Disadvantaged pupils achieved above other pupils nationally. There was no significant difference between the standards achieved by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs and their peers.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- The teaching in the early years requires improvement because it is not consistently good. Teachers' expectations of children are not always high enough to prepare them for the new demands of Year 1.
- The more-able children are not consistently challenged, and tasks provided for them do not always take account of what they already know and can do.
- Occasionally, children are not sufficiently aware of the purpose of activities or tasks and therefore they are unable to effectively develop or practise specific skills.
- The leader of the early years has a secure grasp of the relative strengths and areas for improvement. Nevertheless, weaker aspects of some teaching have not been successfully and securely improved.
- Children entering Nursery and Reception demonstrate knowledge and skills broadly typical for their age. The weakest aspect of their knowledge is communication and language.
- Nursery children settle quickly to the day's events. They know the routines and move sensibly between activities. They help to tidy up and take care of each other. They respond quickly to gentle reminders about 'good listening' and 'good sitting'.
- Children explain and describe events, listen to each other and take turns in conversations. They select appropriate tools for tasks and take care to use them correctly.
- Teaching assistants support the children effectively. They notice individual children's needs and step in quickly to include, help or engage them in conversations.
- Parents are well informed and they know they can approach staff easily. Displays on classroom walls provide parents with weekly information about what the children will be learning.

School details

Unique reference number	124203
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10005193

This inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was also deemed a section 5 inspection under the same Act.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	367
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Esther Knight
Headteacher	Jonathan Jones
Telephone number	01785 356772
Website	www.castlechurchprimary.co.uk
Email address	office@castlechurch.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	19–20 March 2014

Information about this school

- The school is larger than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs is average.
- A higher than average proportion of pupils are supported by the pupil premium (additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals or in care).
- The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Year 6.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed learning in 15 lessons. In addition, inspectors visited lessons to talk to pupils about their work and to review work in pupils' books across a range of subjects.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, subject leaders, the coordinator for special educational needs, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.
- Inspectors met with pupils and observed them during breaktimes.
- A range of documents was examined, including information relating to pupils' progress and attendance, minutes of governing body meetings and records relating to behaviour and safeguarding.
- Inspectors spoke informally to parents. There were insufficient responses to the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, to form a report.

Inspection team

Deana Holdaway, lead inspector

John Demmerling

Her Majesty's Inspector

Ofsted Inspector

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