

Springfield Academy

Salters Lane South, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 2AN

Inspection dates

2–3 February 2016

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- Teaching has not been consistently good enough over time to ensure that all pupils are making good enough progress, particularly in reading and mathematics.
- The quality of teaching in early years provision is variable. The proportion of children ready to start Year 1 is not high enough.
- Early years leadership has not fully addressed variations in the quality of teaching and provision.
- Pupils supported through the pupil premium do not always make the accelerated progress required to move closer to the levels that other pupils attain nationally.
- Leaders and governors have not taken robust actions to address the declining rates of pupils' progress, particularly in reading and mathematics across Key Stage 2.
- Recently appointed subject leaders do not have a clear enough overview of the quality of teaching or the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning across the school.
- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the trust and the governors are committed and supportive of the school. However, strategies recently put in place have not had a discernible impact upon pupils' achievement.

The school has the following strengths

- The CEO and headteacher are ambitious to develop the school. They have recently researched where effective practice can be found and have started to introduce this where relevant.
- Very effective procedures and practice are in place to support vulnerable pupils in challenging circumstances. Staff work hard with pupils and their families to meet pupils' emotional and pastoral needs.
- A wide range of curricular opportunities, including specialist teaching in music and physical education, combined with after-school activities, enrich learning. This enhances pupils' knowledge, skills and interests.
- Pupils' positive attitudes reflect the school's 'rights respecting' ethos. They are polite, well mannered, tolerant and courteous.
- Robust systems, practice and training are in place to keep pupils safe.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that checks on teaching, along with the monitoring and evaluation of actions to improve, are effectively collated to provide an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for improvement
 - strengthening the capacity of subject leaders to check teaching, learning and assessment in their areas of responsibility
 - ensuring that governors become more effective in holding leaders to account and have an accurate view of pupils' progress and the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

- Improve the quality of teaching for pupils across the school, so that pupils make more progress, by:
 - using the school's assessment information to better match teaching to pupils' needs
 - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve and making more effective use of time in lessons
 - sharing the effective teaching practice within school and across the trust.

- Improve provision in the early years by:
 - making sure that the quality of teaching becomes consistently good through the sharing of good practice across the Nursery and Reception classes
 - developing the quality of provision and learning in the outdoors
 - formalising the plans for spending early years pupil premium funding and evaluating the impact of this funding more closely.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of pupil premium funding should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leadership and management require improvement. Over time, senior leaders, including governors, have not done enough to ensure good teaching and progress. They have not acted rigorously enough to address the lack of pupils' progress in reading and mathematics.
- Leaders and governors have been overly positive in their overall judgements of the quality of teaching and pupils' outcomes. While they have an analysis of the school's information about pupils' progress, and systems for checking the quality of teaching, they do not collate this information effectively to arrive at accurate conclusions.
- In 2015, achievement for disadvantaged pupils in Year 6 fell and the gap with other pupils nationally widened. Currently, there are several gaps in the attainment of these pupils when compared with their peers. The school has reviewed its approach to the use of pupil premium funding. For example, a teacher has been employed to support Year 6 disadvantaged pupils. The governor with responsibility for this aspect has also reviewed the impact of this funding, and there is an increased focus on the impact on pupils' achievement. There is no formalised plan for allocation of pupil premium funding available for early years provision.
- Subject leadership in English and mathematics is at an early stage of development. Recently appointed subject leaders have received support to improve their leadership skills. They are well motivated and have begun to introduce strategies to improve teaching and learning following visits to other schools and attending regional professional development events. Subject leaders have started to access training to improve their abilities in checking the impact of these strategies. It is too early to determine the success of these developments.
- The special educational needs coordinator provides effective leadership. Audits of provision are used to identify where improvements in practice and staff training are required. There are strong links with other agencies, and the school provides well-thought-through learning opportunities to meet the specific needs of pupils with special educational needs. As a result, most of these pupils are making at least expected progress and are included fully in the school community.
- Pupils enjoy a wide range of subjects through the curriculum. The school has an effectively planned curriculum based on the National Curriculum subjects. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in music and physical education (PE). Pupils from Nursery through to Year 6 attend swimming lessons, which helps them to develop healthy lifestyles. Access to a variety of after-school clubs enriches the curriculum. Opportunities for improving enterprise skills and links with industry provide pupils with early experience of the world of work.
- The additional funding for sport and PE in primary schools is used effectively to increase the opportunities pupils have to enjoy physical activities and learn from specialist coaches and teachers. This has improved teachers' skills and the quality of teaching in this subject. Pupils take part in competitive sports and a range of after-school clubs. This has a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem. For example, in assembly, pupils were very proud to share the dance routine they had developed for a dance presentation the previous day.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. The school's personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) teaching combined with a 'rights respecting' approach permeate the school. This is positively developing pupils' attitudes both within school and to the community beyond.
- Pupils' have a good understanding of life in modern Britain. They develop a clear understanding of democracy through the work of the school council and house captains. Opportunities to understand other cultures are well developed through visits to a range of places of faith. Events, such as taking part in a 'European song contest', further widen pupils' horizons.
- Performance management systems are in place. Leaders and governors ensure that teachers' pay progression is effectively linked to their performance management objectives.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors are supportive of the school and, through the recently formed education standards committee, have begun to challenge leaders on actions taken to improve pupils' outcomes. However, while governors have the information regarding pupils' progress, they have too positive a view of teaching and learning and the related pupils' outcomes. As a result, their level of strategic challenge has not provided the necessary school improvement.

- The recently appointed CEO of the trust and headteacher have a clear vision for driving improvement at the school. Visits to observe practice in schools with a track record of strong leadership are developing the capacity of senior and middle leaders to lead within the school. As yet, it is too early to determine the impact of this professional development.
- **The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.**
- There are strong, robust systems and practice in place. Staff and governors receive regular and appropriate training. The school works well with other agencies and the home-school support worker is proactive in providing help and guidance for pupils and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- The quality of teaching is inconsistent in English and mathematics. As a result, over time, too few pupils make good or better progress in these subjects.
- Where teaching is less effective, teachers' expectations are too low in relation to what pupils can achieve. Teachers do not show pupils clearly enough what they are expected to achieve. Sometimes pupils spend too much time completing work which they have already grasped. This limits the depth and breadth of learning.
- In some lessons, the challenge for the most-able pupils does not move their learning forward sufficiently and this results in some off-task behaviour and restricts the progress made.
- Teaching assistants are not consistently utilised to make a positive enough effect on pupils' learning. Where teaching assistants have a specific role in developing pupils' learning, they have a far greater impact on pupils' engagement and progress.
- Generally, teachers make effective use of practical resources to support pupils' access to learning. On some occasions, not enough thought is given to ensure that the resources provided enable all pupils to access the learning.
- Improvements have been made to assessment arrangements. Regular assessments, better linked to the National Curriculum, along with moderation of standards with other schools, are establishing a more accurate baseline of current pupils' attainment. However, these assessments are not always used effectively to match teaching to pupils' learning needs, so sometimes pupils are completing work which is already mastered.
- This new assessment system is helping leaders to identify where pupils need to accelerate their progress to achieve the required expectations for their age in English and mathematics. However, not enough attention is paid to the progress of specific groups.
- Pupils' books demonstrate that most teachers consistently follow the school's marking policy as part of their feedback. Discussions with pupils show that they understand how marking can help them to improve their work.
- Pupils receive a range of homework to support the development of their English and mathematical skills. More open-ended activities, such as the 'Going Places' project, provide opportunities for developing independent learning skills and also involve parents with aspects of pupils' learning.
- Where teaching is stronger, teachers have higher expectations, reshape teaching within lessons and respond well to pupils' misconceptions. They plan effectively to meet the needs of the range of abilities within the class and use questioning to deepen learning.
- Mathematics teaching focuses largely on developing basic skills. Opportunities for pupils to use and apply these skills and develop their reasoning skills have very recently improved. In some classes, the work lacks challenge and does not build on pupils' prior learning.
- Pupils receive regular teaching in reading and phonics (how the letters in words represent different sounds). The school has an attractive, well-stocked library to encourage pupils to read a wider range of literature. Pupils' records show that parents generally give their children support with reading outside the school day. Teachers maintain detailed records to track pupils' development of reading skills and match reading books to pupils' reading abilities. Improving the impact of teaching reading remains a priority for the school, as outcomes are not good enough.
- The school's focus on pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling is beginning to bring improvements. Opportunities to write in different subjects are widely evident in pupils' books and in high-quality displays around the school. This is providing a purpose for writing and is having a positive impact on pupils' writing development in most classes across the school.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- The development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong. Opportunities to develop tolerance and consideration of the needs of others are embedded in the curriculum. The school's 'rights respecting' and PSHE curriculum encourages pupils to be reflective, tolerant and active citizens.
- Pupils are self-confident and prepared to put forward their views in a respectful and thoughtful way. Younger children mix well together and take turns, while older pupils will listen to the views of others and add their thoughts to the ideas of their peers.
- Pupils feel safe and valued as members of the school community. They know how to keep themselves safe, including when online. The school also works with parents to develop their understanding of internet safety through events such as 'Safer internet day'. The school's curriculum and a wide range of visits and visitors provide pupils with a good understanding of how to stay safe. Pupils, parents and staff all agree that the school is a safe place to learn.
- The school strives successfully to meet the personal, social and emotional needs of all pupils. This includes commissioning alternative provision where required. The school's records demonstrate that this provision is well matched to pupils' needs. Pupils' academic progress and social development are monitored well by the school's leaders, including the special educational needs coordinator.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. In lessons, pupils are well behaved, keen to learn and work hard. During playtimes and lunchtimes, pupils socialise suitably and engage in lively, friendly games. At lunchtime, pupils mix well with primary pupils from Beaumont Hill Academy, which shares the Education Village site.
- Pupils are courteous and polite and show respect to one another, to adults and visitors. They display a strong sense of pride in their school and were keen to share their learning with inspectors.
- A small number of parents expressed concerns regarding how the school deals with bullying. During the inspection, inspectors were unable to find examples of this. Pupils have a good understanding of the different forms of bullying because the school's curriculum develops this well. 'Our school is strong on racism and bullying' was a pupil's comment, typical of pupils' attitudes in this area. The school's own records show that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are followed up properly by senior leaders.
- The school has a well-structured system for behaviour management. This is well understood by pupils, who know that staff will follow up on their concerns. Systems, such as 'worry boxes' in classes, help pupils to share any concerns they may have. Exclusion rates have fallen over the past three years and the school uses this sanction very rarely.
- Rates of attendance are above the national average. Pupils are keen to come to school and know that regular attendance and good punctuality support their learning. The school is working hard with the families of the small group of pupils whose absence levels are too high. The school's home-school support worker has a positive impact on improving pupils' attendance.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Outcomes for pupils require improvement because progress is too variable across all subjects and most year groups. This is because the quality of teaching has not been consistently good enough over time.
- By the end of Year 6, more pupils are making the progress expected of them over time in writing, but not in reading and mathematics. Not enough pupils, compared with national averages, are making better than expected progress, in reading, writing and mathematics.
- By the end of Year 6, the gaps between disadvantaged pupils' attainment and progress, compared with that of other pupils in the school and nationally, has generally widened. The school's information on these pupils' progress shows that too many current pupils are not making the required progress across the school.
- In 2015, the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving the higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics was well below national averages. There is evidence in the school's assessment information that the progress for the most-able pupils is improving, although there is room for further improvement.

- Pupils who have special educational needs or disability are making at least expected progress. This is because appropriate plans are in place to match teaching to their learning needs. Detailed, personalised programmes are put in place for pupils where required.
- Pupils' achievement in the Year 1 phonics screening is not consistent. The proportion of pupils achieving the expected level has been below the national average in two out of the last three years.
- The proportion of children in Reception who are well prepared for transition to Year 1 is not high enough. However, this has improved over the past three years. Too many Year 6 pupils are not well prepared for starting secondary school; too few make expected or better than expected progress in English and mathematics.
- Since the last inspection, outcomes for pupils by the end of Year 2 have improved. In 2015, pupils' attainment was broadly in line with national averages.

Early years provision

requires improvement

- Children start in the early years provision with skills and abilities that are generally below those typical for their age. From their starting points, children make variable progress. The school's proportion of children reaching a good level of development, while improved in 2015, has been below the national average for the past three years. As a result, too many children are not well prepared for Year 1.
- The quality of teaching is variable. The strong teaching in the Reception class provides an effective balance of teacher-led and child-initiated learning. Activities are well matched to the children's needs, and staff use questioning effectively. Here, the children are motivated, engaged and make good progress. However, while the children in Nursery are well settled and happy, early years practice is not as strong here. For example, while developing writing is a focus for the school, opportunities for mark making or writing are not fully developed. As a result, children make less progress.
- The outdoor learning area provides the potential for a good-quality learning environment. However, opportunities to enhance children's literacy and numeracy skills are not well developed. Adults do not intervene to move children's learning forward through questioning or encouraging engagement. As a result, while children develop their personal and physical skills well, their learning of basic literacy and numeracy skills is not fully developed in this provision.
- Early reading skills, including phonics, are well developed in Reception. Nursery children are introduced to books and early phonics skills. Occasionally, the books used here do not lend themselves to developing children's understanding that text carries meaning, or the key features of books.
- Early years leadership has not fully addressed the variations in teaching and learning across the two classes. The early years leader is currently teaching in Year 4. This makes it difficult to maintain a day-to-day overview of current practice. However, the leader checks early years developments on a regular basis and has a relevant plan for bringing about improvements in this area.
- The achievement of children supported by early years pupil premium funding improved considerably in 2015. Currently, there are no formalised plans or systems for checking the impact of early years pupil premium funding. This restricts how effectively leaders and governors can evaluate its success.
- Early years staff work well with parents and there are strong systems in place for communication between the school and parents. As a result, parents are well involved with assessments of their children's progress and are very positive about the support provided by early years staff. There are good partnerships with other professionals, for example, the speech and language service, to ensure that all children's needs are effectively met.
- Children feel safe and secure in the school. Safety is paramount to staff, and children are well supervised in a safe, secure classroom and outside learning area. Safeguarding is effective and all welfare requirements are met.

School details

Unique reference number	138088
Local authority	Darlington
Inspection number	10001475

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	Academy converter
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	264
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Deborah Wood
Principal	Angela Henderson
Telephone number	01325 254000
Website	www.educationvillage.org.uk
Email address	spsdata@educationvillage.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	17–18 May 2011

Information about this school

- The school is slightly smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- There is one full-time Reception class and two part-time Nursery classes.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is above average. (Pupil premium is the funding the school receives for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those looked after by the local authority).
- The proportions of pupils from minority ethnic groups and of pupils who speak English as an additional language are well below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is above the national average.
- Mobility levels of pupils joining and leaving the school are similar to the national 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 by the end of Year 6.
- The school converted to academy status in April 2012 and is part of the Education Village Academy Trust.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed a range of lessons and part lessons in all classes. The headteacher joined the lead inspector for three of the observations in lessons on the first day of the inspection.
- The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour around school and reviewed the school's promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The inspectors observed pupils in the playground and during lunchtime.
- The inspectors scrutinised pupils' work in their books and in the learning journals of children in the early years provision.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher and teachers responsible for leading English, mathematics, early years provision and with the special educational needs coordinator. The lead inspector met with a group of governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body, and held meetings with the Chief Executive Officer for Education Village Academy Trust.
- A group of pupils discussed their opinions about the school, their attitudes and their learning with the lead inspector. An inspector listened to six Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils read.
- Inspectors took account of the responses on Ofsted's online parent survey, Parent View. Inspectors held discussions with parents at the start of the school day on day two of the inspection.
- The lead inspector considered the online staff questionnaire responses received.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and looked at a number of documents, including minutes from meetings of the governing body, pupils' achievement information and the school's evaluation of its own performance and development plan. Behaviour and attendance records and information relating to safeguarding were also scrutinised.

Inspection team

Michael Reeves, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Jennifer Cave	Ofsted Inspector
Frances Gowland	Ofsted Inspector
James Reid	Ofsted Inspector

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