

Leek First School

East Street, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 6LF

Inspection dates	18–19 May 2016
Overall effectiveness	Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good
Outcomes for pupils	Good
Early years provision	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Requires improvement

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher, other leaders and governors took effective action to deal with weaknesses that were highlighted at the last inspection. Staff at all levels fully support the drive for improvement.
- There have been rapid improvements in teaching and in outcomes for pupils. Gaps in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and others have narrowed considerably.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing, mathematics and other subjects because teaching is good. Attainment is rising as a result.
- The early years is a stimulating and inviting environment. Children make good progress and are well prepared for their next steps.
- Pupils try hard in lessons and persevere even when they find tasks challenging. They are positive, enthusiastic learners.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. Their attendance is above average.
- Staff make sure that pupils are safe at school. Parents agree that pupils are well cared for.
- Governors play a prominent part in school life. They hold leaders robustly to account and help shape the school's direction.
- Parents are highly supportive of the school. They particularly value its open, friendly and inclusive ethos.

It is not yet an outstanding school because

- The rate at which differences in achievement between disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and other pupils are reducing is not consistent from class to class. This is because of a number of factors, including individual circumstances and minor variations in teaching.
- Leaders' evaluations of the impact of actions and reports about performance are not sharp or succinct enough.
- The school's website does not include an evaluation of the impact of pupil premium spending.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Further strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring that reviews of aspects of the school’s performance contain an incisive analysis of the impact of action taken
 - ensuring that information about pupils’ achievement, including the progress of different groups of pupils, is presented clearly and succinctly
 - making sure that the school’s website contains all of the required information.

- Improve teaching further by ensuring that:
 - teachers plan work that is more closely matched to the next steps that will take pupils on, including in the early years for the most able children
 - teachers and teaching assistants make sure to pronounce the letter sounds with greater accuracy
 - gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and that of their peers close more rapidly
 - gaps between the attainment of pupils who have special educational needs or disability and other pupils are further reduced.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management is good

- The headteacher, other leaders and governors responded to the outcomes of the last inspection with a strong determination to put things right as quickly as possible. Expectations were raised, and swift action was taken to improve all aspects of the school's work. Leaders and governors are rightly pleased with the impact but not complacent. They view the improvements they have made so far as an important step in the right direction.
- Parents are strongly supportive of the school. They especially value the emphasis that is put on supporting and developing each child's individual talents and interests. They also highlight the school's friendly, open and inclusive ethos.
- Leaders, staff at all levels and governors share an understanding of what the school stands for and what they are working towards. All staff who completed the questionnaire said that they are proud to work at Leek First School and know what they are striving to achieve.
- Subject leaders are playing a strong part in leading improvements in their subjects. They have worked well with teachers to ensure consistency of approach and to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge. The impact shows in the improvements in pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Procedures for managing teachers' performance are firmly in place. Objectives for teachers relate clearly to the national standards for all teachers. Teachers are held to account for the impact that they have on pupils' achievement and for the effectiveness with which they carry out their leadership roles.
- Leaders and governors know the school's strengths. Areas for further development are accurately identified and action to be taken is set out clearly in the school's improvement plan. However, evaluations tend to be descriptive, listing the many things that have been done, rather than giving a thorough analysis of the impact.
- The school has a wealth of information about how well different groups of pupils are progressing, and about the impact of interventions on the progress of individuals. The information, however, is not pulled together to give a succinct overview, which makes it harder for the governing body to quickly identify the most important messages from the information they are given.
- The curriculum is suitably broad. It links topics together in ways that make sense and which add depth. Teachers take care to select topics that will capture pupils' imaginations and make them keen to find out more. Pupils say that they particularly enjoy visits and visitors to the school that help them with their topics. There is a broad range of clubs and activities and the school offers a residential experience. Pupils and parents said how much they enjoy 'Fitness Fridays' when they have the chance to exercise together. All of these activities enhance the curriculum well.
- The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well. Spiritual development is strong. It shows in pupils' delight in learning new things and their fascination with the world around them. The school's programme of assemblies includes topics that foster pupils' understanding of Britain today and the values that underpin modern British society, such as tolerance and democracy.
- Leaders and governors think carefully about how they will spend additional funding. They make sure that spending is targeted at areas of need. The impact of pupil premium spending shows in the better progress now being made by eligible pupils. However, the information is not published on the school's website, as it should be. The primary sports funding has been used to improve facilities and to increase the number of free sporting opportunities available after school. Take-up of these clubs has risen substantially.
- The school's leaders and staff have worked closely with the local authority since the last inspection. Staff at all levels said how much they had benefited from the support and guidance of local authority personnel, and from the local leader of education. The local authority checked the school's progress carefully. The school's leaders found this process valuable and so are continuing with it, even though the local authority no longer needs to work with the school to help it improve.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governance has improved greatly. Governors acted quickly to implement the recommendations of an external review of governance. The revised committee structure makes sure that meetings are well focused and that time is used effectively at meetings of the full governing body. Governors have a suitable range of skills and expertise that is used well, and they seek training to keep their knowledge up to date. Link governors work closely with members of staff to keep aspects of the school's work under review, including through visits to the school. Governors have a good understanding of their

role in holding leaders to account and in determining the school's strategic direction.

- The governing body checks that statutory requirements are met, such as for safeguarding, health and safety and the performance management of staff. Minutes of meetings show that governors probe beneath the surface and ask questions before making decisions or agreeing recommendations. They also check on the impact of spending decisions, for example the use of pupil premium and primary sports funding.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. Thorough and well-documented checks are made on the suitability of staff. All members of staff receive training in child protection and in other aspects of safeguarding that is regularly updated. This has included the government's 'Prevent' duty. The headteacher makes sure that staff understand the need to be vigilant and to listen to pupils, and that they must refer any concerns, however minor, to a named member of staff as quickly as possible. The school works closely with other agencies to support individual children and their families.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good

- The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection and has many strengths. Teachers and teaching assistants have worked hard to develop their practice and have risen to leaders' higher expectations. Teachers have fully embraced the school's revised approaches, for example on how writing will be taught, or how feedback is given to pupils, and they are consistent in following them.
- Teachers set a positive climate for learning in lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are supportive and encouraging. Mistakes are seen as an essential part of learning. As a result, pupils are not reluctant to try new things or to tackle challenging problems.
- Teachers have high expectations of how pupils will behave and respond in lessons. Sharply focused questions keep pupils on their toes.
- Teaching assistants work well with individuals and groups of pupils and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. They are supportive, but expect that pupils will think and complete work for themselves. However, when teaching reading or spelling, they sometimes do not pronounce the sounds of letters accurately.
- Much work has gone into making sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are accurate. Teachers work closely with staff in other schools to share assessments and to agree what attainment looks like for each year group in different subjects. Formal assessments at the end of the Reception Year and Year 2 have been externally verified. Teachers have a secure understanding of what their pupils know and can do.
- Teachers use their assessments to plan work that meets pupils' needs, is challenging and makes pupils think deeply. This is particularly the case in mathematics and is largely successful, but on occasion teachers are too ambitious and the level of challenge is too great. In these cases, pupils do not make the progress that was intended. However, teachers spot when pupils are struggling too much and adapt the tasks accordingly.
- Teachers discuss the attainment and progress of their pupils regularly with the school's leaders. Particular attention is given to the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs, and to identifying any pupils who need to catch up. Strategies are agreed and implemented to help them do so. However, the strategies do not have a consistently strong impact and there is some variation between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs and other pupils as a result.
- Teachers promote a love of books and reading. Sometimes, all classes work on the same text, at different levels. Part of the school's main corridor has been transformed into Little Red Riding Hood's forest. Each year group has contributed good-quality written work to the displays. Reading diaries show that pupils read frequently, including at home with their families. The library area is inviting and well used. In order to boost the reading skills of the most able disadvantaged pupils still further, the literacy leader runs a book club for these pupils.
- Pupils say that they enjoy their learning, because teachers make lessons interesting and fun. They say that they know what they need to do to improve their work, and where to go for help if they get stuck.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Staff know the children and their particular needs well. Parents' comments show that they particularly value this aspect of the school's work. 'Each child is valued for their individual strengths' and 'I feel my daughter is nurtured and cared for, as well as meeting all her goals' were typical comments.
- The school makes sure that pupils know how to keep themselves safe and understand any risks they may face. Lessons and assemblies cover a broad range of topics including internet safety, bullying and not talking to strangers. Older pupils are taught how to cross the road as part of the preparation for their transfer to middle school, as many will then walk to school by themselves. Pupils are taught to respect one another and those of different beliefs and traditions.
- Pupils are typically confident and not afraid to try things out or make mistakes. They are willing to 'have a go' and will persevere even when they begin to struggle. Pupils are also happy to support one another in lessons. These attributes will serve the pupils well as they progress to the next stage of their education.
- Pupils say that they feel safe at school. They are not worried about the behaviour of others or about bullying, although they say that there are times when not everybody behaves as well as they should. However, should instances of bullying or teasing occur, they are confident that the teachers and teaching assistants would sort it out. All of the parents who completed a questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their children safe.
- Pupils have chances to take responsibility, such as being part of the school council, helping out at lunchtimes or supporting the member of staff in charge of first aid at breaktimes. They also get involved in the local community, for example distributing food at Harvest time and raising funds for charities. The school's house system encourages healthy competition to earn points for behaviour and effort.
- As part of its work to support disadvantaged pupils, the school has recently set up a nurture group. Its aim is to work with pupils who have particular needs relating to their personal development. These needs range from shyness and reticence to over-enthusiasm and impulsivity. It is too soon to see the impact of this work on pupils' personal development or their achievement.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils typically behave well in lessons and around the school. They are cheerful, polite and friendly, and very keen to talk about their school and their learning. At breaktimes they play happily alongside one another and are lively and energetic. They line up quickly and quietly as soon as the whistle blows.
- Staff have high expectations of how pupils should behave in lessons. Pupils usually respond very well to these expectations and sit up straight, pay attention and get on with their work. Occasionally, the attention of a few slips and they can become a little restless, but they do not mess about or interfere with the learning of others.
- Parents raised no concerns about pupils' behaviour or how it is managed. This view was echoed by staff. There are very few incidents of inappropriate behaviour. The school's behaviour policy's main expectation is that: 'everyone will act with courtesy and consideration to others at all times'. The positive relationships between staff, pupils and parents reflect that aim.
- Pupils' enjoyment of school shows in their attendance. Attendance has risen over the past two years and is above the national figure for primary schools. The school monitors attendance carefully and intervenes when a pupil's attendance drops below 90%. Very few pupils are absent too often.

Outcomes for pupils are good

- Pupils' outcomes have improved since the last inspection. Pupils are achieving well across the school in a range of subjects. The school's assessments and work in pupils' books show good progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Displays around the school illustrate the depth and breadth of work in other subjects, especially science, history and geography.
- The results of the phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 in 2015 were well above the national figure. The outcomes for boys, girls and disadvantaged pupils were all above those for pupils nationally. At the end of Year 2 in 2015, those pupils who had not met the standard the previous year were checked again, and every pupil had caught up.

- At the end of Year 2 last year, every pupil reached the expected level 2 in reading, writing and mathematics, and about a third of pupils reached the higher level 3. Taken overall, these results were significantly above average. There were no substantial differences between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school, but the attainment of the small number of pupils who have special educational needs or disability was lower. The assessments show that pupils in last year's Year 2 made good progress from their starting points in Year 1. Disadvantaged pupils in particular narrowed the gap considerably with other pupils in this key stage.
- The school's current assessments and work in pupils' books confirm that good progress is being maintained across Years 3 and 4. Pupils leave Year 4 well prepared for middle school.
- The most able pupils have built well on their prior attainment. For example, those who attained highly in writing at the end of Year 2 have maintained these high standards. Their writing shows a high degree of creativity and imagination, as well as technical understanding. The school's assessments and the results of standardised tests show that the most able pupils make good progress in reading and mathematics over time. Their reading skills are much higher than expected for their age.
- Gaps between the attainment of disadvantaged pupils and others have narrowed across the school. These pupils typically make progress at a rate that matches that of other pupils, but in some year groups they are not making the even faster progress that is needed to close the gaps completely.
- The particular needs of pupils who have special educational needs or a disability are carefully assessed. The achievement of individual pupils improves, sometimes rapidly, as a result of targeted interventions, and they begin to catch up. However, there is still some variation across the year groups and between subjects.

Early years provision

is good

- The early years leader works closely with staff in the adjoining Nursery to make sure children are well prepared for the transition from one setting to the other. Nursery staff pass on records of children's achievements, likes and dislikes. This makes sure that Reception staff have a good understanding of children's individual needs and dispositions. Parents also share their knowledge of their children.
- Children's attainment varies widely when they start in Reception. Some children have the understanding and skills that are typical for their age. An increasing number, however, join Reception with difficulties in their speech, language and communication skills. Staff take care to help pupils develop their language skills through an emphasis on speaking, listening and storytelling, but also by involving outside agencies, such as speech therapy, where necessary.
- Over the past three years, children's achievement at the end of Reception has risen considerably. This is because teaching is good and more sharply focused on their needs, so that they make good progress. The proportion who attained a good level of development was close to the national figure last year and is predicted to increase again this year. The small number of disadvantaged children achieved as well or better than others. Children are well prepared to start Year 1.
- Some children achieve highly. During this inspection, children were engrossed in the story of *The Hungry Caterpillar*. They tried to write the story in their own words. Some wrote several sentences that were appropriately sequenced and punctuated with capital letters and full stops. They used their knowledge of letters and sounds to try to spell words – some words were incorrectly spelled because they were especially challenging, such as 'stomach ache', but were readable because they were phonetically plausible. Other children produced super collage pictures of the caterpillar.
- Staff make frequent assessments of what children know and can do, and plan activities that will take them on in their learning. Occasionally, the most able children are not moved on to more challenging activities when they are ready, which slows their progress. There are also times when adults do not pronounce the sounds of letters precisely and accurately. This makes it harder for less confident children to use their phonics knowledge to sound out unfamiliar words when they are reading.
- The Reception class provides a well-organised, bright and stimulating environment indoors and out. There is plenty of scope for children to make choices and develop their independence. The curriculum and the daily activities are carefully planned to capture children's interest and imaginations. During this inspection, children were fascinated as they observed butterflies emerging from chrysalises and looked at tadpoles swimming in a tank. They made sure that every adult who entered the classroom observed them, too.
- Children behave very well. They play and work together safely and with enjoyment.

- Adults make sure that children are safe. They have a good understanding of the school's safeguarding procedures and particular issues for the early years. Welfare requirements are met.
- The early years leader works closely with the other adults in the Reception class. The early years staff share a strong commitment to continuous improvement, so that children get off to the best possible start in school.

School details

Unique reference number	124098
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10009264

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

Type of school	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	146
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mick Dwyer
Headteacher	Kevin Allbutt
Telephone number	01538 483 200
Website	www.leek-first.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@leek-first.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	18–19 March 2014

Information about this school

- Leek First School has about half the number of pupils as a typical primary school.
- Children start in the Reception class full-time. Most of them have attended the Nursery provision that shares the school site. This provision is not managed by the governing body. There is also a privately run before- and after-school club. Both of these provisions are inspected separately.
- Pupils stay at the school until the end of Year 4, when they transfer to middle school.
- Almost all of the pupils are White British.
- Just under a third of the pupils are disadvantaged, which is a little above the proportion seen nationally. The school receives additional funding, known as the pupil premium, to support the education of these pupils.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs or disability is in line with that seen nationally.
- The school has received support for the past two years from a local leader of education, who until recently was headteacher of Springfields First School.
- The school works closely with other first schools in the area, as part of the Leek Education Partnership.

Information about this inspection

- The inspector visited all classrooms at least once, accompanied by the headteacher, to look at teaching and learning and to talk to pupils about their work. She listened to pupils reading. She also attended an assembly and observed pupils at break and lunchtime.
- The inspector looked at information about pupils' attainment and their progress. She looked at work in pupils' books and on display in classrooms and around the school.
- The inspector met with the headteacher, other leaders and members of staff, the chair of the governing body and four other governors, the local leader of education who has been supporting the school and a parent.
- The inspector took account of the views of pupils as expressed in the online questionnaire and in formal and informal discussions with pupils. She also examined the responses made by 31 parents on Ofsted's Parent View website, and those of seven members of staff who completed the online questionnaire.
- The inspector looked at a range of documents, including those on the school's website. She examined minutes of meetings of the governing body, the school's self-evaluation and plan for improvement, and documents related to keeping children safe.

Inspection team

Linda McGill, lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

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