

Woodcroft First School

Wallbridge Drive, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 8JG

Inspection dates

6–7 July 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement

- The systems that school leaders have in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's work are not sufficiently robust, and as a result leaders do not have an accurate view of what the most pressing priorities for improvement are.
- School leaders do not have a clear understanding of current pupils' attainment and do not use assessment information effectively to measure the progress that pupils are making.
- School leaders do not effectively measure the impact that the pupil premium grant is having on narrowing gaps in attainment for disadvantaged pupils.
- Pupils currently in school are not making the progress that is expected of them and are not reaching standards that are appropriate for their age.
- Teachers do not have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can attain. As a result, too many pupils, especially the most able, undertake work that is too easy for them.
- There are too few opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical knowledge in reasoning and problem solving.
- The teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make in words) is not accurate or systematic enough and this slows the progress of pupils in their reading.
- Governors do not have a sufficiently strong understanding of the progress pupils make as they move through the school. Consequently, they do not provide enough challenge and support to school leaders. They have not ensured that all the required information is available on the school's website.
- Leaders have not placed sufficient emphasis on promoting pupils' depth of understanding of fundamental British values such as democracy and tolerance, and have not ensured that they have a sufficiently deep understanding of other peoples' faiths and beliefs.
- Communication with parents is not as effective as it should be.

The school has the following strengths

- Children make a positive start in the early years and make good progress due to good teaching.
- Pupils behave well and feel safe in school. They show consideration and care for each other.
- The curriculum is well planned to provide pupils with a range of interesting learning activities and is enhanced by a range of exciting trips and events that stimulate the pupils' interest.
- Attendance is above average.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school’s work are sufficiently robust to provide an accurate understanding of the school’s strengths and areas for improvement
 - ensuring that leaders use assessment information effectively to have a clear view of how different groups of pupils, including the most able, disadvantaged pupils and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are attaining and progressing
 - making sure that governors are provided with sufficiently detailed information on the outcomes of all groups of pupils within the school and use this information to challenge and support school leaders to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching and outcomes for all pupils
 - ensuring that school leaders actively promote pupils’ understanding of the fundamental British values of tolerance, respect and democracy, and deepen pupils’ understanding of the beliefs and faiths of other people
 - ensuring that all the required statutory information is available on the school’s website
 - improving methods of communication with parents so that they are better informed about their children’s progress.

- Improve the quality of teaching and thereby raise achievement, especially in mathematics and reading by:
 - ensuring that teachers have sufficiently high expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially the most able, and set work that is accurately matched to their needs and abilities
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills and use reasoning in challenging mathematical problems
 - ensuring that the teaching of phonics in early reading is accurate and well matched to the needs of the pupils
 - ensuring that teachers make better use of the assessment information that they have on pupils to measure pupils’ progress and more accurately match work to the different pupils in their classes.

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

An external review of the school’s use of the pupil premium should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management can be improved.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- School leaders' evaluation of the effectiveness of the work is over generous and does not accurately identify the most pressing priorities for improvements. This is because the systems that the school has in place for monitoring all aspects of its work are not sufficiently robust. They lack a clear focus on identifying whether the work of all staff is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes and well-being. This has resulted in plans for improvement that do not accurately identify what the most urgent priorities are.
- School leaders have worked collaboratively with other local schools in the Leek Education Partnership to develop a common approach to assessing pupils' progress. However, they have not yet used the information to analyse and evaluate the attainment and progress of pupils as they move through the school. This means that they are not aware of where pupils are making insufficient progress. Consequently, they have not taken action swiftly enough to bring about the necessary improvements in teaching. This has resulted in the majority of pupils who are currently in school not making the progress that the school considers to be appropriate.
- The school has used the pupil premium funding to employ additional staff to work with disadvantaged pupils and to enable these pupils to access all aspects of school life. However, leaders have not closely monitored the impact that the funding is having on these pupils' outcomes and cannot accurately identify if gaps in attainment are narrowing.
- The work that the school undertakes to actively promote fundamental British values is still not fully embedded or given sufficient prominence by school leaders. As a result, pupils are not secure in their understanding of how these values of tolerance, respect and democracy support them as citizens of this country.
- Leaders have not ensured that pupils' understanding of the beliefs and faiths of people, both in this country and across the world, is as well developed as other aspects of the school's work to support their spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding.
- While the majority of parents are supportive and appreciative of the work that the school does with their children, a small minority expressed strong concerns over communication. The lack of clear assessment information on pupils' outcomes means that communication with parents about their children, including reports on their progress, does not provide sufficient clarity.
- The school website does not provide all the required statutory information. No information is available on admission arrangements, about governors or about all aspects of the curriculum.
- Annual performance targets are set for all teachers and are based on school and individual needs. While progress against these targets is monitored during the year, the lack of incisive information on pupils' outcomes means that the ability for leaders to hold teachers fully to account are not as sharply defined as they could be. However, where necessary, the headteacher has taken strong action in the past to address some teaching that was not effective.
- The headteacher has a detailed knowledge of each pupil as an individual. She has established an ethos where pupils are cared for and are encouraged to show consideration for others. She is well regarded by staff, pupils and most parents. All staff who responded to the online questionnaire were positive about all aspects of the school's work.
- The headteacher and other leaders have high expectations of how pupils behave and this has resulted in the calm and orderly atmosphere that pervades the school. The very large majority of parents who responded to the online Parent View survey were positive about most aspects of the school's work. They recognised the contribution that the headteacher has made to Woodcroft First School. One parent's comment that: 'The school offers a wide range of opportunities to the children in a safe and comfortable learning environment. All the children's achievements are highlighted and they are praised for their good behaviour,' was typical of the views of most parents.
- There have been several changes within the senior leadership team recently, due to staff retirement and maternity leave. The deputy headteacher has been in post since January 2016. He and another member of the senior leadership team are developing a clear view of the priorities for the school and show the capacity to help bring about improvements.
- The school has developed a curriculum that offers pupils a range of exciting learning opportunities based around topic themes and books, including 'Once Upon a Time', 'The King's Stilts' and 'Florence Nightingale'. 'Wow' starter activities are used to stimulate pupils' curiosity, such as investigation of a crime scene. Links between different subjects are built into the topics, with some good opportunities for

pupils to apply their writing skills. Regular visits, to places such as Stafford Castle and the local country park, help to enhance the curriculum. Extra-curricular clubs, such as the eco club, the science club and the gardening club, are appreciated by pupils and help support their learning. All pupils in Year 3 learn the violin and take part in a music concert with pupils from other schools at the Victoria Theatre in Stoke-on-Trent.

- School leaders have used the additional sports funding effectively to employ a specialist teacher adviser who has led training for staff. This has helped to develop their confidence and competence in teaching this aspect of the curriculum. Funding has also been used to increase opportunities for pupils to take part in competitive sports against other schools, including hockey, cross-country and football. Pupils' skills in a variety of physical activities have improved and they have developed positive attitudes towards keeping fit and healthy.
- The local authority has provided light touch support to the school over recent years. However, it has supported staff development in English and mathematics. They have also supported governors in ensuring that there is additional support for the temporary leadership in school when the headteacher retires.
- **The governance of the school**
 - Governors have used external information well to compare the performance of pupils in Year 2 with other pupils nationally. They have also undertaken training to ensure that they fully understand how to use the information. However, the information that they have received from school leaders about pupils in all year groups and classes across the school has not been sufficiently analytical. As a result they are not fully aware of any groups that are not achieving well. This has limited their ability to hold school leaders fully to account.
 - Governors are involved in setting performance targets for the headteacher and use advice from an external adviser to ensure that these targets are appropriate and are monitored closely. They have a clear understanding of the arrangements for the performance management of teachers within school and understand the links to pay progression.
 - Governors bring with them a range of expertise that they use to fulfil their roles. They monitor how the resources that are available to the school are used and have a good understanding of safeguarding arrangements within school. They are aware of how the pupil premium funding is used within school. However, they are not yet in a strong enough position, due to a lack of comparative assessment information, to fully evaluate its impact on pupil outcomes for disadvantaged pupils.
- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. The headteacher has made sure that staff are appropriately trained, including regarding the 'Prevent' duty, and understand their responsibilities in keeping pupils safe. All staff have a good understanding of the individual needs of pupils, particularly those who are vulnerable. Links with outside agencies are strong and support is provided for pupils and their families when it is needed.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- There is too much teaching across the school that is not effective in achieving good outcomes for pupils. There has been a considerable turnover of staff since the last inspection and some pupils have suffered from a lack of consistency. This has resulted in a slowing of learning, particularly for the older pupils.
- Teachers do not have high enough expectations of what pupils can and should achieve. In the mixed ability classes, work is often not accurately matched to the different ages and abilities within the classes. As a result, too much work, particularly in mathematics, is undemanding and not sufficiently challenging for pupils, particularly the most able. Pupils in Year 4 commented that in mathematics they were repeating some of the work that they had undertaken in the previous year and that they found it too easy.
- The teaching of mathematics requires improvement. Teachers have focused on teaching basic skills. They have not provided opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge to solve problems that require reasoning. When problems are set, they are almost always 'sums' written in words that do not challenge the pupils or require them to think deeply. Too often, pupils undertake work that is within their capacity and this means that they do not progress as quickly as they should.
- The teaching of phonics in early reading is not sufficiently systematic or accurate. Teachers and other staff do not all accurately model the sounds in words and as a result too many pupils are not secure in how to read unfamiliar words. Because of this, too many pupils, particularly those of lower abilities, do not make enough progress and find reading difficult and frustrating.

- Teachers regularly assess pupils' work and work with colleagues from within school and from other local schools to ensure that the assessments are accurate. However, the outcomes of these assessments are not used effectively to measure the progress that pupils make across the year or to match work to the specific needs of the pupils.
- Teaching in English is more effective. Pupils are taught the core skills in spelling, punctuation and grammar and are then provided with regular opportunities to write longer, independent pieces of work. The subjects that they write about engage their interest and they are able to apply their skills to produce well thought out and interesting pieces of writing and to make progress over time. For example, in a Year 1 and 2 class, pupils wrote a diary entry from the perspective of a soldier, which was well punctuated for their age and used some relatively advanced vocabulary.
- Teachers often use questioning well and provide pupils with opportunities to answer in extended sentences. This helps to develop pupils' spoken English and the questions are usually well matched to the different abilities of the pupils.
- Teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to the learning of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. They ensure that tasks are adapted to their needs and ensure that the pupils are able to participate fully in the life and work of the class.
- The majority of teachers follow the school's marking policy and provide pupils with indications of how they have achieved in their work and where they can improve.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

is good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils take pride in their school. They like the fact that everyone knows everyone else. One commented that: 'Woodcroft is like a family. We all care for each other.' They know that adults look after them and say they feel safe in school.
- Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude towards their learning. Even when work is less engaging or interesting, they maintain concentration and listen to what others are saying.
- Pupils are polite, well mannered and keen to talk to adults about what they are doing. They appreciate the responsibilities they are able to take on, such as being members of the school council and the eco squad. They help to look after the school environment, including maintaining the school allotment. They regularly donate produce from the allotment to older people in the local community.
- Pupils say there is little bullying in school. Some pupils are not fully clear about what is bullying and what is unkind behaviour but they are confident that teachers and other staff in school will always sort any issues out. The very large majority of parents feel that their children are well looked after and they agree that bullying is rare.
- Pupils understand how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations, including when using the internet. They know that there are systems in place in school to keep them safe when using the internet. They appreciate the visits from the local police and paramedics, who help them extend their knowledge of personal safety and well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils behave well, both in lessons and during breaktime and lunchtime. They cooperate well with each other, listen attentively and show interest when other people are talking. For example, in an assembly, pupils came into the hall sensibly, sat quietly and enjoyed hearing about the work that a class had been doing during the term.
- Pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They settle quickly to tasks and try hard to produce their best work. Even when the level of challenge is not sufficiently high, the very large majority of pupils sustain concentration and do not disrupt each other.
- Pupils understand the school rules and appreciate the recognition that they get for good behaviour. Older and younger pupils socialise well during playtimes and they exemplify the comment a pupil made that, 'We treat other people in the way that we want to be treated.'
- Attendance is above the national average. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in the fact that they arrive on time and attend regularly.

- The school keeps records of the few cases of inappropriate behaviour and they indicate that there are high expectations of how everyone in school should behave.

Outcomes for pupils

require improvement

- Inconsistencies in teaching and a lack of sufficiently high expectations from teachers mean that pupils do not make the progress that they should. School assessment information for pupils who are currently in school show that too many pupils are not making the progress that is expected of them in reading, writing and mathematics. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including scrutiny of work in pupils' books and observations during lessons, indicates that outcomes for many pupils are below those that are typical for their age.
- The most able pupils do not make enough progress because the tasks that they are given do not provide sufficient challenge. A group of higher ability pupils in Years 3 and 4 commented that often they found the work too easy and had already undertaken some of the work in the previous year.
- Outcomes in mathematics are lower than in reading and writing. This is because pupils spend too much time undertaking calculations and are not given opportunities to consider how to apply their mathematical skills and knowledge in solving problems.
- Disadvantaged pupils in school do not attain as well as other pupils in school or other pupils nationally. The provision for these pupils is matched to individual needs and enables them to participate fully in school life. However, a lack of sharply focused tracking means that leaders cannot accurately identify if gaps in attainment are narrowing or if the additional interventions are fully effective.
- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics screening check was above the national average in 2015. The percentage of pupils who achieved the standard has fallen slightly this year. A lack of accuracy and a systematic approach by all staff means that pupils do not always make the progress that they could in reading.
- In 2015, attainment at the end of Year 2 was broadly in line with the national average in reading, writing and mathematics and above the national average for overall attainment. Pupils who are currently in Year 2 appear to be working at standards that are mainly typical for their age.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities appear to make progress that is broadly in line with their classmates. The school makes good use of links with external specialist support and matches provision accurately to the individual needs of each pupil.

Early years provision

is good

- Good leadership and management of the early years have helped ensure that the provision accurately matches the needs of the children. Children settle in quickly when they start at school and feel safe and well cared for.
- Children start in the early years with skills and knowledge that are broadly typical for their age. They make good progress and by the time they leave Reception, the majority are well prepared to start in Year 1. This is because teaching is good and staff have a clear understanding of each child's needs and abilities.
- In 2015, the proportion of children who achieved a good level of development was above that seen nationally. Children's attainment in reading and writing was slightly lower than in the other areas of learning. Teachers' assessments of children who are currently in Reception indicate that this will be the case again this year.
- The small number of disadvantaged pupils make progress that is at least in line with their classmates. The additional funding that is available to the school is used to provide additional support to the children on a regular basis and their progress is monitored to make sure there are no gaps in their learning.
- Teachers and other adults carefully plan activities that interest the children and afford them opportunities to investigate and apply their learning. For example, during the inspection, a garden centre had been set up in the outdoor classroom. Children discussed what they would need to do when they planted seeds and correctly identified that soil, light and water would all be required. They made price labels for the plants they were going to sell and used their number skills to count accurately the number of plants. Adults used questioning well to promote discussion and to assess children's understanding.

- Relationships between children and adults are good. Children understand the rules and know about taking turns and showing respect for other people. They behave well and have positive attitudes towards learning.
- Links with parents are good. Parents are encouraged to be involved in their children's learning and are appreciative of the support that the staff provide for their children.
- Safeguarding and welfare arrangements are effective and meet statutory requirements. Good support is provided for children with special needs and/or disabilities and this enables them to fully access all the activities that the other children are involved in.

School details

Unique reference number	124152
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10011164

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	First
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4–9
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	212
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Ann Knobbs
Headteacher	Ruth Cartlidge
Telephone number	01538 483186
Website	www.woodcroftfirstschool.leek-staffs.org.uk
Email address	office@woodcroft.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	24–25 May 2011

Information about this school

- Woodcroft First School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Pupils are taught in mixed-age classes, apart from one class.
- The early years consists of one Reception class and one mixed-age Reception and Year 1 class.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils, those who are supported by the pupil premium funding, is below average. The pupil premium provides additional funding for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and those who are looked after by the local authority.
- Most pupils are of White British heritage. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is below that in most schools.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.
- A breakfast club operates on the school premises but is privately managed and therefore inspected separately.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 12 lessons or parts of lessons.
- The inspectors looked at work in pupils' books and listened to pupils read. They met with two groups of pupils, including members of the school council, to gain their views of the school. The inspectors observed pupils' behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime, as well as in lessons. They attended an assembly.
- The inspectors looked at a range of documentation, including assessments and records of pupils' progress, the school's checks and records relating to safeguarding, child protection and attendance, records related to behaviour, records of how teaching is managed and the school improvement plans.
- Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, a member of the school's senior leadership team, and a middle leader. The lead inspector met with three governors, including the chair of governors, and had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors took account of the 50 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, and considered free-text responses from 22 parents. They also talked to parents who had attended an assembly. Staff responses were also considered through the 11 responses to the online staff questionnaire.

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