

Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School

Boothan Old Road, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST4 4EE

Inspection dates

11–12 October 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	Requires improvement
Outcomes for pupils	Require 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

- Since the previous inspection, academic standards at the end of key stage 2 have dropped.
- The quality of teaching varies from class to class. While there is some highly effective practice, this is not the case in all classrooms.
- In some classes, time is not used efficiently. Some pupils become confused by teachers' explanations or mark time because they already understand and are not pushed on to learn more.
- Teaching and assessment in mathematics lack precision. The most able pupils, in particular, do not reach the standards of which they are capable.
- In recent years, leaders have managed many changes of staff. These changes have disrupted the consistency of teaching and reduced the effectiveness of staff training.
- Leaders and governors know that teaching and standards need to improve and have plans in place to make this happen. However, to date, they have not brought about sustained improvements in key stage 2.
- Teachers do receive regular feedback about their work but systems for setting classroom expectations lack sufficient rigour.
- Too many pupils regularly arrive late for school and miss learning time. This hinders their progress at school.
- Pupils who arrive during the school year, often with limited English, do not always get enough support to help them catch up quickly.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have demonstrated an ability to challenge underachievement in some parts of the school. Together, they lead the school with compassion, realism and ambition.
- Provision in the early years is good. Children quickly come to enjoy school and make good progress when they first start.
- Standards in key stage 1 have risen year after year. Pupils get particularly effective support with their early reading.
- Pupils behave well and are kept safe in school.
- The school promotes worthy values that help pupils to get along with others and show respect for different beliefs.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, in order to raise standards in English and mathematics in key stage 2, by making sure that:
 - all staff understand the demands of the current school curriculum and that this translates into higher expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - staff subject knowledge in mathematics is up to the mark in all classes and that teaching builds secure conceptual understanding
 - appropriate and effective support is given to those pupils who start school at different times during the year, with little or no English, and need help to catch up
 - there is sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, especially in mathematics lessons
 - all teachers make effective use of ongoing assessment in class to inform their teaching.
- Improve the impact of leadership and management on teaching, learning and pupils' punctuality, by:
 - ensuring that all newly appointed leaders have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities
 - sharpening the rigour of performance management so that checks on teaching and learning have a clear and specific focus and lead to sustained improvements, especially in key stage 2
 - ensuring that all staff have consistent expectations for the use of learning time in lessons
 - making sure that leaders do more to challenge poor punctuality and continue to work with families to improve attendance.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management Requires improvement

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have managed a difficult situation with calm realism and compassion. In recent times, the number of pupils has increased significantly and there have been many changes of staff. Key leaders have been kept busy by these changes and, meanwhile, the quality of teaching and standards have declined. Leaders' evaluation of the school's current position is largely accurate and plans are in place to bring about improvements. These plans have been successful in key stage 1 but, as yet, leaders have not brought about sustainable improvements in key stage 2.
- School leaders regularly check on classroom practice and provide feedback to teachers. An annual cycle of performance management has been maintained, with targets set for staff. When underperformance has been stark, the headteacher has taken decisive action in order to bring about change for the better. However, the overall rigour of staff performance management across the school has been diluted as leaders have been distracted by the high turnover of staff. As a consequence, leaders have not done enough to make sure that all staff understand the demands of the current curriculum. This has led to a dip in English and mathematics standards in parts of key stage 2. In addition, while leaders have brought about improvements in attendance, they have had less success in challenging poor punctuality.
- Leaders have actively sought external advice and support to help them drive school improvement. Some of the advice provided has been spot on and given the school a constructive steer. One recent review identified that the school's leadership structure would benefit from reorganisation in order to improve accountability across the school. Inspection evidence gathered during this inspection found that leaders had acted on this advice. New subject and phase leaders are in post and show promise in these roles. However, it is early days and they are still developing an understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Even so, they have already developed plans to both support and challenge staff in order to improve the efficiency of their work.
- The school curriculum offers pupils a broad range of subjects and experiences, including an annual residential trip and various extra-curricular enrichment activities. Whole-school events such as 'Minster Town' week, when pupils come up with enterprising ideas in order to raise funds, help them to see the relevance of the skills they learn at school and to understand the link between effort and reward.
- A particular feature of the curriculum is the promotion of key learning attributes such as ambition, perseverance and empathy. These worthy qualities help to equip pupils with attitudes that will serve them well in the future. School assemblies are uplifting occasions when pupils reflect on the values that unite the school community. In their daily interactions with pupils, adults reinforce the importance of honesty and respect for others. Pupils respond well to this, which shows in their behaviour and attitudes to learning and to one another. However, as already stated, there is still more work to be done to ensure that pupils acquire the literacy and numeracy skills necessary for the demands of secondary school education.
- The pupil premium funds are used with increasing effectiveness. Differences between the progress of disadvantaged pupils and others are reducing and, in key stage 1, have

vanished completely. That said, in key stage 2, all groups of pupils are not achieving as well as they might.

- The sport premium is also making a positive difference. The school provides regular sports clubs and pupils have taken part in inter-school tournaments. Leaders' plans for developing staff expertise through training stalled last year due to staff turnover but are now getting back on track. The school site has limited outdoor space and so some of the sport money will be used to provide transport to local facilities.
- Parents who responded to Ofsted's online questionnaire expressed positive views. All respondents would recommend the school to other parents.

Governance of the school

- The governance of the school is effective.
- The school's governors have an accurate understanding of the school's performance. They understand why standards have dropped, but do not present any excuses and are focused on finding solutions. To this end, they have carried out benchmarking exercises with other similar schools and sought external advice. They have identified some key levers needed for school improvement and are providing constructive challenge in order to bring about the necessary changes.
- There are a few vacancies on the governing body. Nevertheless, the governors in post possess a helpful set of skills and an ability to think and plan strategically. They do not shy away from tough decisions but also make sure that everyone is treated fairly. Governors are ambitious for pupils to reach higher academic standards but also value the school's successful attention to pupils' well-being and social development.
- Governors attend regular training, are outward looking and responsive to new ideas. They are alert to their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty and liaise with other agencies if need be.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- All staff have a good understanding of their duty of care. Governors regularly review safeguarding arrangements and compile frequent reports. These reports not only check compliance with statutory duties but also highlight the culture of safeguarding within the school. A well-organised and up-to-date noticeboard in the staff room also serves to keep everyone informed. On this board, and around the school site, there are many reminders that make everyone aware of what to do should they have a concern about a child's safety or welfare. Inspectors' checks on the minutes from staff and governor meetings found that safeguarding is a regular topic of discussion.
- All the proper checks on staff and visitors are carried out and files are stored securely, but are readily to hand when needed. Pupils' records are transferred in a timely and secure manner. Records for any new arrivals are checked promptly and any late records are chased up quickly. Consequently, staff have the information they need and get in touch with other organisations promptly when necessary.
- Outside on the playground, the site is kept secure and supervision arrangements give no cause for concern. First aid treatment is provided swiftly when required.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Across the school, the quality of teaching varies from class to class. There is some highly effective practice in some places, such as Year 2 and upper key stage 2, but in other places the pitch and challenge of teaching does not meet pupils' learning needs with sufficient precision.
- For various reasons, there have been numerous changes of staff in recent times and, currently, temporary teaching arrangements are operating in some classes. In all classes staff work hard and do their best but, inevitably, all these changes have disrupted the consistency of teaching. The impact of this on standards is most evident in key stage 2, and more so in mathematics than in other subjects.
- Inspectors' observations and checks on work found that, across the school, the level of challenge for the most able pupils in mathematics is often similar to that provided to other pupils. In some cases, this is because these pupils have not made enough progress in previous years and are now being helped to catch up. In other cases, however, pupils who already understand sit and wait for others to complete tasks and do not push on with their own learning.
- As for other pupils, they do very well in some classes but less well in others. This variability stems from differences in teachers' subject knowledge and awareness of the demands of the current school curriculum. In addition, a few shortcomings in the way that teachers check on what pupils can or cannot do limits the effectiveness of teaching. In some classrooms, for example, pupils rely on adults' instructions to get through their work rather than explanations or demonstrations that help to build proper understanding. This approach hinders teachers' ability to assess pupils' skills and knowledge or to plan meaningful next steps in learning.
- On the other hand, some practice is highly effective. Teaching in English, mathematics, science and other subjects can be imaginative, relevant and inspiring; it grabs and hold pupils' attention with good results. In Year 5, for example, pupils produced some good-quality writing because expectations were clear, the task drew on prior learning and it was well pitched for the different ability levels in the class.
- School leaders have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and have organised classes so that teachers with particular skills and expertise can support others. This arrangement is helping to improve the overall quality of teaching. Nevertheless, there is still more to do to make sure that high expectations operate in all classrooms.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- All staff understand their duty of care and pastoral support is a strength of the school's work. From an early age, pupils are taught how to keep themselves safe and to behave in a responsible way. Any accidents or upsets that occur in school are attended to promptly and pupils report that an adult will always listen to their worries and help with any problems. Around the school there are several worry boxes where pupils can post concerns should they wish. In addition, there are also numerous posters reminding

pupils and staff about what to do in different situations.

- A small number of parents raised concerns about bullying, and these were followed up by inspectors. Pupils and staff acknowledge that bullying can happen in school and that it has happened. Pupils who spoke with inspectors could give several examples of how bullying had been tackled in the past. They were satisfied with the school's actions and the steps taken to help everyone understand the impact of their actions on others. The school's records provide a detailed log of the actions taken in response to unkind behaviour. It is clear that staff do all they can to resolve conflict and minimise recurrence. This inspection found no evidence of bullying going undetected. In fact, the school staff are very alert to the damaging effects of all forms of bullying and, if it does happen, it is challenged and stopped.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils requires improvement
- Once in school, pupils behave very well. They are courteous to visitors and attentive to their teachers. However, a number of pupils regularly turn up late and miss the start of lessons. In addition, some parents arrive late to collect their children at the end of the school day. This is unfair on the children, and school leaders are right to challenge this. Indeed, this is the reason why pupils' behaviour requires improvement. Pupils who are regularly late for no good reason miss learning time and run the risk of developing a bad habit that could hamper their future prospects.
- On a more positive note, the school's work to improve overall attendance is meeting with increasing success. Attendance rates have risen year after year and current attendance is in line with that seen nationally. This is good news and the persistent efforts of the home-school link worker have been instrumental in bringing about this steady improvement.
- In lessons, pupils' behaviour is managed well by staff. Most pupils are attentive and get on with whatever is asked of them. Pupils who struggle with aspects of their behaviour get firm, but kindly, guidance and support and are helped to make the most of their time in school. Consequently, learning time is rarely disrupted by poor behaviour and pupils get on well with one another and their teachers.
- On the playground, pupils make good use of the available space. Older pupils take on jobs such as play leaders or door monitors and carry out these roles in a responsible and sensible way.

Outcomes for pupils

Require improvement

- Since the previous inspection, standards in reading, writing and mathematics have fallen from average to below average at the end of key stage 2. While progress and standards in reading and writing are now showing signs of improvement, standards in mathematics remain below average and progress rates vary from one class to the next.
- There are several reasons for this drop in standards. Firstly, there have been many changes of staff. Inevitably, this has disrupted the consistency of teaching and the programme of staff training. On top of this, the school has seen a significant increase in pupil numbers, with an increasing number of pupils arriving at short notice during the school year. Many of these pupils speak little or no English and need extra help with the English language in order for them to make sense of the school curriculum. In many cases, the support that these pupils receive is successful and they are soon on

track to reach the standards that they should. However, in other cases, the support on offer is not entirely suitable for their needs and they do not catch up, or keep up, with their peers.

- A third reason for the drop in standards is that teachers' subject knowledge and confidence when teaching mathematics varies from one class to the next. Consequently, pupils' progress is faster or slower depending on the class they are in.
- Across key stage 2, the most able pupils in particular do not make sufficient progress. In several year groups, pupils who clearly present as capable and keen to learn have gaps in their understanding and knowledge. This is most evident in mathematics.
- The progress made by disadvantaged pupils in key stage 2 presents something of a mixed picture. This group are making increasingly better progress in reading and writing but, like other pupils in the school, their progress in mathematics is weaker. The progress of the most able disadvantaged pupils across key stage 2 presents a similar pattern.
- It is a completely different story further down the school. In key stage 1, standards have risen year after year. It is clear that the good start children make in the early years is built on successfully in key stage 1. By the end of Year 2, all groups of pupils have made good progress. In 2015, for instance, the proportion of pupils reaching the old national curriculum level 3 was in line with national figures. It is also worth noting that, in recent times, disadvantaged pupils have done as well as, if not better than, other pupils nationally at the end of Year 2.
- The school's attention to pupils' early reading skills is also paying off. Pupils' scores in the Year 1 phonics screening check have fluctuated from one year to the next but, over time, have not been far away from the national figures. When dips have occurred, extra support has been put in place with largely successful results. Pupils who read to inspectors coped well with the material provided by the school.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified quickly and support is put in place. The needs of these pupils vary significantly and this is reflected in the varying outcomes for this group, both from year to year and within a single year. Nevertheless, inspectors found that the school is quick to respond to these pupils' needs, and works closely with other agencies when necessary. However, over time, these pupils also have done better in English than in mathematics.

Early years provision

Good

- The majority of children start school with a level of knowledge and skills below that typical for their age. They make good progress in the early years and by the time they start in key stage 1, a significant proportion are working at age-related expectations. In 2016, for example, 67% of children reached a good level of development at the end of the Reception Year, which is not far below the national figure.
- The reasons for this good progress have their roots in effective leadership. The early years leader has made the most of the space available, both indoors and outside, to create purposeful and safe learning areas. Teachers and other adults plan interesting and relevant lessons that build carefully on children's experiences and existing skills. This good teaching results in happy children who behave well and readily engage in learning.

- During this inspection, some of the nursery-age children were laying out a nursery rhyme trail for other children to follow. This fun and language-rich activity generated excitement and discussion and helped to build children's early literacy skills and interest in reading. Elsewhere, children counted the legs on Incy Wincy Spider or used their daily snack time to calculate the number of milk cartons and biscuits. This attention to key skills, during whatever activity is being carried out, is typical of the day-to-day provision in the early years. In the main, adults are alert to the day-to-day gains in children's classroom learning and use the information that they gather to plan next steps.
- Home-school 'care and share' link books are used for staff and parents to record details about children's experiences and achievements. Some of the books seen by inspectors were of high quality with plenty of input from home and school. Some books have less home input. In either case, however, the information gathered through these books is under-used. Currently, staff do not routinely call on it when feeding information into the school's tracking system. Consequently, a few opportunities to build on achievements evidenced in these books are missed.

School details

Unique reference number	132200
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10002803

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	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	415
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	David Morgan
Headteacher	Lynne Willis
Telephone number	01782 234 800
Website	www.stokeminster.stoke.sch.uk
Email address	stokeminster@sgfl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	1 February 2012

Information about this school

- Stoke Minster CofE Aided Primary School is larger than the average primary school. The number of pupils on roll has increased since the previous inspection. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils who speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is above the national average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils at the school is above the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is just below the national average.
- The school offers full-time early years provision for Nursery and Reception-age children.
- In 2015, the school did not meet the government floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' progress and attainment in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The school meets requirements on the publication of specified information on its website.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all year groups. The inspectors also examined pupils' work in books, and considered school test and assessment information.
- Most of the Year 6 pupils were out of school on a residential trip during the inspection. Inspectors observed the provision for those not on the trip and looked at Year 6 pupils' work.
- Inspectors observed pupils' behaviour, and the school's procedures, at the beginning and end of the school day, at lunch and breaktimes, and when pupils were moving about the school site and taking part in an assembly.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff, senior and middle leaders, governors and a representative from the local authority.
- By the end of the inspection, there were 10 recent responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire (Parent View) and three written comments. The inspectors noted these and also spoke with parents on the playground.
- A number of school documents were examined. These included information about pupils' achievement, evaluations of the school's performance and numerous policy statements. Records relating to governance, staff performance management, training, the quality of teaching, external support, behaviour, admissions, attendance, safety and safeguarding were also scrutinised. The school's website was also checked.

Inspection team

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In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route. www.gov.uk/pupil-premium-information-for-schools-and-alternative-provision-settings.

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