

Smallthorne Primary School

Chetwynd Street, Smallthorne, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire ST6 1PR

Inspection dates

2–3 November 2016

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

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a good school

- The headteacher has tackled with determination previously identified weaknesses in leadership, governance and teaching to achieve rapid improvements in the school's effectiveness and capacity to improve.
- Monitoring of teaching, including by middle leaders, is effective in securing improvements.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are outstanding. They are keen, willing to learn and have high respect for others.
- There is a strong culture of safeguarding in the school to ensure that pupils feel very safe.
- Pupils make very rapid progress in upper key stage 2 and so outcomes are improving for pupils by the end of key stage 2 in writing and especially in reading.
- Disadvantaged pupils, those who speak English as an additional language and those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making rapid progress in most year groups as a result of high-quality teaching and support. Over time, their outcomes have improved.
- Teaching is good in most year groups as a result of well-planned work to challenge pupils from their different starting points.
- Pupils get off to a very good start in the Nursery as a result of the quality of the provision and high expectations. They settle very quickly.
- Attendance has improved rapidly and now compares favourably with the national average.
- Promotion of pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a strength of the school.
- The environment of the school is calm and purposeful.
- Outcomes in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 are not as strong as they are in other subjects. Pupils are not as secure with their basic skills in order to work in greater depth.
- Outcomes in key stage 1 in 2016 were low in reading, writing and mathematics as previous teaching was not strong enough, but leaders have taken swift action to address this.
- Teaching of mathematics is not yet consistently good in all year groups. This has led to some variation in the rate of progress for pupils from one year group to another.
- There is some inconsistency in the extent to which middle leaders have a strategic view of their aspect of responsibility.
- The website is out of date and does not meet requirements.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve outcomes in mathematics by the end of key stages 1 and 2 by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching of basic skills in mathematics is consistently good in all year groups
 - teachers consistently provide more focused activities in each year group for pupils to develop their numeracy skills, especially in key stage 1
 - teachers challenge pupils consistently, through feedback and additional extension activities, to work in greater depth.
- Leaders and governors should ensure that:
 - the role of middle leaders is developed so that they can contribute fully to the evaluation of their areas, strategic planning for the school and improving the provision in their areas of responsibility
 - all required information is entered on the school website, including for governance, special educational needs, pupil premium and physical education and sports premium funding, and the website is kept up to date at least annually.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Since the headteacher was appointed, shortly after the last inspection, he has brought about rapid improvements. His strength of character and personality have taken many of the staff with him and where weaknesses and resistance were identified, he has not shied away from making tough decisions.
- The school fell into very rapid decline immediately after the last inspection. Within a year of his appointment, he had set up a completely new senior leadership team. A whole new governing body was put in place, including a new chair. There have also been significant changes in the teaching staff.
- The environment of the school is welcoming. The stunning displays in corridors and calm background music ensure that there is a quiet but purposeful atmosphere in the school.
- Morale is high among leaders, teachers, all staff and pupils. Consequently, the headteacher has established an effective and highly committed team of leaders and staff willing to go the extra mile for the pupils.
- Key stage 2 outcomes have risen, especially in reading and writing, the quality of teaching is good and the capacity of leadership has been improved by the development of senior and middle leaders who are engaged effectively in monitoring teaching and pupils' outcomes.
- Analysis of achievement information has been overhauled. Meetings to check on pupils' progress have been instigated to hold teachers to account for outcomes for their class including groups of pupils and individuals. Arrangements for performance management linked to outcomes are rigorous. Previous weak teaching has been challenged quickly through training and support and increased monitoring. Pupils are set challenging targets in order to raise their achievement.
- The headteacher knows the strengths of the school well. He is aware that there is still much to do and that areas for development remain. Where teaching is still not good enough, it is being tackled promptly, leading to improvements or staffing changes. Leaders know that key stage 1 and mathematics across the school need to improve further. They are taking steps to address this by seeking external support for mathematics and making changes to teaching staff in key stage 1. These developments are still early at this stage of the year but already improvements are apparent.
- The broad and balanced curriculum enables pupils to achieve across a wide range of subjects. Parents are well informed through each topic about which subjects or aspects are covered. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about history, art and languages, but some older pupils in key stage 2 are disappointed that some of these subjects are not taught as regularly as they would like.
- There is a very wide range of after-school clubs for pupils to enjoy, including cookery, science and painting. Pupils spoken to were highly enthusiastic and said that they want a longer school day so that they can study more subjects and attend more clubs.

- The school physical education (PE) and sports premium is spent well. Specialist external sports coaches for dance, football, multi-skills and gym work alongside staff to help them deliver the new curriculum. Plans for the assessment of pupils in PE are well developed.
- The school provides well for the needs of those pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The emphasis is on ensuring that teachers in class provide high-quality lessons to minimise the need for additional interventions. The progress of individuals is tracked well and is a regular focus in meetings on progress.
- Provision for pupils learning English as an additional language ensures that they are well placed to make rapid progress from their starting points, especially in speaking and listening.
- Leaders have made changes to how the school spends its pupil premium funding to ensure that differences between outcomes for disadvantaged pupils and other pupils nationally are diminishing by the end of Year 6. Instead of focusing on smaller class sizes in Year 6, the money is being used to target specific needs.
- Disadvantaged pupils, including those who are most able, are doing well in reading and in writing. Older ones are currently being targeted in mathematics with an additional challenge group, which is enabling them to work at greater depth, for example on coordinates.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is organised into an extremely effective thematic plan linked to the curriculum. The school celebrates the cultural diversity of its pupils, for example through a Polish day. Pupils' understanding of the world has increased through, for instance, considering issues around sustainability.
- Leaders promote British values well in assemblies and through individual activities such as pupils meeting the speaker of the House of Commons. Pupils have opportunities to vote on golden rules and are also invited to apply to be head boy or girl. They learn about principles such as education for all. Pupils display high levels of tolerance and respect for others.
- The school benefits from its close partnership with both the local authority and the multi-academy City Learning Trust. This has led to moderation of assessment information, external reviews, training, school-to-school support and additional mathematics provision for the most able older pupils.
- Pupils are well prepared for the next phase in their education by the end of Reception and Year 6. Pupils currently in Year 4 were below age-related expectations at the end of key stage 1 in 2015.
- Some less-experienced middle leaders are still developing in their roles and do not have the same level of strategic overview of their aspect as others.
- Leaders have not ensured that they provide sufficient information and evaluation on the website as required by the Department for Education (DfE), including up-to-date information on special educational needs, a written pupil premium strategy and impact of the PE and sports premium.

Governance of the school

- Governors provide a high degree of challenge and support to leaders. They provide strategic direction for the school. Minutes of governors' meetings are punctuated with

challenging questions, whether about pupil premium expenditure, teaching or outcomes for different groups of pupils. They know the school's strengths and weaknesses well.

- Through their link roles and attendance at raising achievement and progress meetings, governors scrutinise different aspects of the work of leaders. Where they have recognised weaknesses, they have ensured that leaders put measures in place to address them, for example:
 - ensuring that the school has a single central record in place that meets statutory requirements
 - improving the quality of teaching and outcomes for pupils, including disadvantaged pupils.
- Governors have not yet ensured that leaders provide all the information on the website as required by the DfE, including information about the governors themselves.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective. There is a strong culture of promoting pupils' well-being and safety in the school. If staff have a concern, however small, it is looked into; nothing is regarded as insignificant. Staff know pupils and families well and are vigilant in looking out for any changes in pupils' behaviour or appearance that might give cause for concern.
- All checks are carried out thoroughly and designated safeguarding leaders are well trained and up to date with the latest guidance on keeping children safe in education. Until recently, the school did not have a compliant single central record in place. Following the appointment of a new business manager, this has been addressed as a matter of urgency and now the school meets its statutory requirements for safeguarding.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teachers plan well for different groups of pupils in their lessons. They check pupils' starting points before moving them on to the next piece of work. They ensure that pupils who are disadvantaged, or those who have special educational needs and/or disabilities, are given work that is appropriately challenging to support them to move to the next stage in their learning.
- Pupils who are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language to the one they use at home are given numerous opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills.
- Teachers provide additional challenges to ensure that most-able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do as well as they can. They also provide well-thought-out additional reinforcement and explanation for those who need help in catching up. For example, when pupils were learning to tell the time in key stage 1, some, who found telling the time difficult, received a much longer and more detailed explanation than those who understood the principles quickly.
- Additional challenges are provided for pupils through written feedback, where extension tasks are set and marked there and then so that pupils receive instant

feedback.

- Teachers have good relationships with pupils and ensure that the ethos in classrooms is conducive to learning. There is an almost complete absence of any low-level disruptive behaviour.
- Phonics is taught well. This enables pupils to become fluent readers, including those who are both most able and disadvantaged, as they use their phonics skills to decode unfamiliar words.
- Teaching assistants are deployed well to support individuals or groups of learners. They show good subject knowledge and ask challenging questions that move pupils on with their learning. They make good use of the 'working walls' to support pupils.
- Homework is set regularly and pupils have a choice in the level of challenge they can attempt.
- The large majority of the parents who responded either to Parent View or freetext agreed that their children are taught well in school.
- Occasionally, activities lack focus where insufficient attention is given to developing pupils' basic mathematical skills.
- The quality of written feedback and additional challenge for the most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, is not yet consistently high enough across all year groups.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Outstanding

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school and are always keen to learn. They work well together, and give each other their full support in their learning. They are eager to participate in discussions, for example on finding different ways to solve division problems in mathematics. They listen attentively to others' views.
- Pupils spoken to said overwhelmingly that they feel safe in school. They said bullying does not occur, but if any incident happens, it is dealt with effectively by staff. They feel secure because of the high fences and know how to keep themselves safe in potentially risky situations, for example when using the internet.
- Pupils act as ambassadors through leading on assemblies. They act as buddies on the playground and happily take responsibility for outdoor equipment. Through the school council, pupils make suggestions which leaders act upon. Pupils contribute ideas towards topics studied such as 'The Titanic'.
- Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is promoted exceptionally well. Pupils take responsibility for decisions, for example voting on golden rules for behaviour. Pupils spoken to responded positively to the recent 'Black history month'.
- A very small minority of parents who responded said bullying was not dealt with well by the school, but this was not supported by other parents, by the pupils themselves or by inspection evidence.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is outstanding.
- Pupils act as role models in the way they conduct themselves in lessons and around the school. They speak to visitors politely and courteously.
- They play safely on the playground and move sensibly and quietly around the school.
- There have been no permanent exclusions for several years and fixed-term exclusions are exceptionally rare.
- There has been a significant improvement in the rate of attendance over the recent years, from well below average to broadly average. There is a three-year rising trend of improvement.
- Hardly any incidents of low-level disruption were seen by inspectors, even in those few instances where an activity lacked focus and was not sufficiently challenging. Pupils show resilience and perseverance in their work.
- Most parents who responded to either Parent View or freetext agreed that the school makes sure that their children behave well.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- Outcomes have been improving at the end of key stage 2 since they fell rapidly immediately after the previous inspection. In the most recent provisional test results, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in reading was very high and above average in writing. Similarly, progress from key stage 1 to 2 in 2016 was high in reading and writing, and broadly average in mathematics. The proportions working in greater depth in writing and a high standard in reading were above average.
- Pupils currently in school are making good progress from their starting points in most year groups, especially pupils learning English as an additional language, who develop their listening and speaking skills quickly.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are making good progress as they are targeted for additional support in lessons to back up the high quality of teaching they receive. Their outcomes are closely scrutinised in meetings on pupils' progress.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, are doing well, particularly in their reading. The accelerated reading scheme provides an assessment structure which pupils enjoy as they get instant feedback on how they are doing. This spurs them on to reach the next level.
- The large majority of parents who responded to either Parent View or freetext agreed that their children made good progress.
- The proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in phonics by the end of Year 1 is high and continuing to rise.
- Differences in outcomes with other pupils nationally are diminishing for disadvantaged pupils by the end of Year 6, especially in reading and writing. However, as with other

pupils in school, their rate of progress is not as strong in mathematics as it is in reading and writing.

- In the most recent validated assessments at the end of key stage 1, pupils did not make as much progress from their starting points at the end of Reception as expected. This was because of previous weak teaching.

Early years provision

Good

- Leaders have an accurate view of the strengths which exist, particularly in the Nursery. Through experienced and passionate leadership, there have been improvements over time in outcomes for children.
- Children get off to a very rapid start in the Nursery from their below-typical starting points, so that by the time they leave Reception, they are broadly in line with the national average for the proportion of children who achieve a good level of development. Outcomes are checked regularly by the local authority to ensure their accuracy.
- Over time, the difference in outcomes for disadvantaged children compared to other children nationally has diminished.
- Highly trained staff intervene effectively to move children's learning forward through formal and informal free-flow activities. Consequently, currently children in the early years are making better than expected progress from their baseline entry points.
- The curriculum appeals to children's interest. For example, emergency vehicles and superheroes engage the interest of boys.
- Parents have the opportunity to contribute to the planning of stimulating activities for their children. Staff demonstrate good skills during these activities, where parents can join in.
- Behaviour of children is of a very high standard. Nursery children have settled quickly into routines and expectations.
- Children's progress in Reception is not as rapid as it is in the Nursery. Opportunities for children to practise their basic mathematical skills are more limited in the Reception Year.

School details

Unique reference number	123987
Local authority	Stoke-on-Trent
Inspection number	10000521

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	234
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Dawn Clewes
Headteacher	Chris Crook
Telephone number	01782 235265
Website	www.smallthorneprimary.org.uk
Email address	smallthorne@sgfl.org.uk
Date of previous inspection	29–30 May 2012

Information about this school

- Smallthorne is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is high at about one in five, which is well above average. The percentage of pupils with a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan is in line with the national average.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well below average, as is the percentage who do not speak English as their first language.
- The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for pupil premium funding is very high, although there is a three-year falling trend. Just over two-fifths of the pupils in school are eligible for free school meals.
- The proportion of pupils who join or leave the school mid-way through a key stage is slightly above average.

- The current headteacher was appointed after the last inspection, as were all senior leaders and all members of the governing body, including the current chair.
- The school has been waiting two years to become an academy as part of the City Learning Trust.
- Based on their 2015 results, the school meets the government's floor standards. These are the minimum standards expected for pupils' learning and progress in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6.
- The school does not meet requirements on the publication of information on its website about assessment results, behaviour, pupil premium, PE and sports premium, pupils who have special educational needs, accessibility and governance.

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed eight lessons or parts of lessons, of which five were jointly observed with the headteacher or deputy headteacher. In addition, inspectors made a number of other short visits to lessons and other activities, for example to look at pupils' books and talk to pupils.
- Inspectors heard pupils read.
- Inspectors held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, other leaders, other members of staff and a group of pupils. The lead inspector spoke to three members of the governing body, including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. He also spoke by telephone to the executive director of the City Learning Trust.
- There were 13 responses to Parent View freetext and 14 responses to the online questionnaire, Parent View, to enable inspectors to take account of parents' views.
- Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a number of documents, including monitoring of teaching, governing body minutes, improvement plans and school information on pupils' recent attainment and progress.
- Inspectors also considered behaviour and attendance information, policies and procedures including special educational needs, pupil premium, PE and sports premium funding, safeguarding and child protection.

Inspection team

Mark Sims, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Elizabeth Ellis-Martin	Ofsted Inspector
Benetia Mounsey	Ofsted Inspector

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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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