

Highfields Primary School

Elder Lane, Burntwood, Staffordshire WS7 9BT

Inspection dates

1–2 November 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

- Highfields is an improving school. Senior leaders and governors know what the school does well and what it needs to do to improve further.
- Leaders have ensured that teaching is good and has improved since the time of the last inspection.
- Senior and subject leaders have designed and implemented a curriculum which motivates pupils to make good progress.
- Pupils achieve well, particularly in reading and writing. Leaders have ensured that the importance of reading is understood by staff and pupils.
- The most able pupils, including those who are disadvantaged, do not achieve as well as they could in mathematics. This is because they are not given work which challenges them sufficiently well.
- Teachers do not always make it clear what pupils of all abilities are expected to demonstrate when they explain how they tackle mathematical problems.
- Disadvantaged pupils achieve well overall. While there is little variation in the achievement of most other groups, the attainment of boys is more variable than that of girls.
- Pupils enjoy coming to school. Their above-average attendance has been sustained in recent years.
- Pupils conduct themselves well. They enjoy taking on leadership opportunities.
- Pupils are well cared for. Staff ensure that pupils are kept safe.
- The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils know the importance of being tolerant and show their understanding in their daily work and play.
- Staff and parents work well together to ensure that children get a good start in the early years. The provision in the early years is good.

Full report

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve the teaching of mathematics by ensuring that:
 - the most able pupils are presented with reasoning problems which make them think hard
 - teachers make it clear to pupils what effective explanation looks like and then check to ensure that pupils have met these expectations.
- Ensure that the attainment of boys at least matches that of girls in all year groups.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- Senior leaders and governors demonstrate clear ambition for what they want the pupils in their school to achieve. They have effectively addressed the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection and have continued to secure good developments.
- Senior leaders are quick to tackle weaker teaching. As a result, teaching is typically good across the school. The headteacher, well supported by the deputy and assistant headteachers, has embedded effective systems designed to help teachers improve their own practice. These actions have helped improve teaching to the current standard.
- Senior leaders have gained a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses currently in the school through their refined monitoring of the school's performance. For example, if boys are identified as making insufficient progress, leaders carry out follow-up checks by looking in these pupils' books more often than others.
- Senior leaders ensure that funding is spent effectively. They are skilled at evaluating the difference pupil premium funding has made in enabling disadvantaged pupils to make better progress. The progress of disadvantaged pupils is always reviewed at meetings involving teachers and leaders. Leaders make it clear what sufficient progress should look like for disadvantaged pupils of different abilities. They keep governors informed about the strengths and weaknesses currently evident in the school. This work helps leaders plan and facilitate training for staff which is designed to address any evolving weaknesses.
- Following significant staffing changes in recent years, the teaching team is now stable. The headteacher now has greater confidence to train and prepare teachers for future leadership roles. As a result, leadership has been strengthened as more staff are involved in decision-making and in taking on more responsibility for school performance. An example of this development is a teacher taking on the responsibility for implementing assessment systems and supporting the headteacher in monitoring pupils' progress.
- Senior and subject leaders have worked together to develop and implement a curriculum which engages and motivates pupils well. Pupils say that they enjoy their lessons as they are encouraged to learn about topics which interest them. This approach contributes to pupils' good progress and personal development. Leaders check that teaching in each year group enables pupils of all abilities to read and learn successfully about a wide range of subjects. As a consequence, there is a good balance between different subjects taught.
- The school makes effective use of its primary school physical education and sport funding. It has met its aims of improving pupils' fitness levels and for reluctant pupils to engage more with sporting activities. Pupils are also developing leadership skills through their team leader work in physical education lessons. A wider range of after-school clubs is on offer for the pupils. Activities include archery and fencing.
- The school's relationship with the local authority has improved over the past two years. Colleagues from both parties agree what the school wants to achieve and how it will go

about further developments. The local authority has worked well with the school, for example in brokering support for the headteacher and governors since the last inspection. This partnership has led to improved teaching and outcomes for pupils.

- Senior and middle leaders have developed a bespoke and effective assessment system for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers plan lessons using up-to-date information about how well pupils with different abilities are performing. The information also helps governors to interpret pupils' progress information in order to effectively hold the school to account. Governors are aware of the variability in boys' attainment.
- Leaders are aware that pupils at Highfields do not readily experience a wide range of cultures and faiths in their day-to-day lives. In order to prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain, leaders ensure that pupils learn about different cultures and faiths through the curriculum, which includes visitors who represent different faiths and cultures. This focus helps pupils develop an understanding of the importance of being tolerant of others.

Governance of the school

- Governance is effective.
- Governors restructured their governing body 18 months ago. This enabled them to identify and address weaknesses in the way they had previously held the school to account. As a result of the restructure, individual governors know what their roles and responsibilities are and how their work contributes to the effectiveness of the governing body. Governors engage effectively with parents by gaining parental views on school performance.
- Through written and verbal reporting to full governors' meetings, individual governors are able to convey what they have understood from their work. For example, if a governor visits the school to meet with a subject leader and look at pupils' books, the governor will inform other governors. As a result, governors gain a more informed insight into school performance.
- If concerns are raised about an aspect of school performance, governors' minutes show that the chair of governors makes it clear to the headteacher what the issue is. The headteacher states what actions will be taken to address the concern and subsequent minutes show how governors evaluate the effectiveness of this work.
- Governors have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. They use information about pupils' progress to help them evaluate how well individual teachers are performing.
- All statutory duties are met, including those relating to safeguarding. Governors ensure that budgets for different aspects of the school's work are well spent. These include pupil premium and sports funding.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Senior leaders and governors have ensured that all staff understand their responsibilities. During the inspection, staff were questioned about what they would do in certain situations. Their responses were clear and aligned to the agreed processes adopted by the school.

- Staff are kept up to date with safeguarding aspects. Senior leaders ensure that all staff attend training sessions. Parents, pupils and staff talk positively about how the school is effective in keeping pupils safe.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- Teaching at Highfields has improved since the time of the last inspection. Teachers have used the advice gained from their training to improve their own practice. Teachers know why their meetings with senior leaders focus on the teachers' standards document, as this helps them understand what is expected of them and how they can progress in their teaching career.
- Teachers and teaching assistants have secure subject knowledge. This knowledge helps them plan and deliver work which ensures that pupils make good progress. Their planning of lessons is also well informed by current information about what pupils need to do next in order to both consolidate and move on in their learning.
- Although there are few disadvantaged pupils in each year group, teachers monitor their progress closely. Very few most-able pupils are also disadvantaged. Teachers know that senior leaders are especially interested in how well these pupils are progressing. If disadvantaged pupils are not making sufficient progress then teachers are expected to make changes to how they are taught. Changes might include how they group pupils for certain activities or how they ensure that these pupils are questioned more regularly in lessons. As a result of this effective teaching, disadvantaged pupils make at least similar rates of progress to their classmates.
- The teaching of reading is effective. Pupils understand why there is a drive from leaders and staff to encourage all pupils to read more often for pleasure and understanding. The school environment promotes the importance of reading well. This includes the library. Pupils were asked to take inspectors to their favourite place in the school, and the library was their first choice.
- The teaching of early reading skills, including phonics, is good. Teachers and teaching assistants use assessments of how well pupils are securing such skills to help them teach specific reading skills well. For example, pupils with high reading ability are asked questions which expect them to show a deeper understanding of the books they are reading. Pupils of all abilities use their secure understanding of phonics to help them read fluently.
- Leaders and teachers agreed specific strategies for the teaching of writing at the start of last year. These are now embedded in the school. Pupils understand the purpose of these strategies, including writing pieces before and then after a series of lessons. They know that their teachers want to see improvement between the two pieces, as the latter piece should incorporate skills newly learned. These skills include grammar and punctuation. Pupils of all abilities made good progress through the last academic year and continue to do so this year.
- Senior leaders make sure that teaching assistants are well deployed around the school. In lessons, staff know which groups they are working with and why. This arrangement includes their work with pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The teaching of this group of pupils is effective as pupils' specific needs are understood

by staff who then teach skills which enable the pupils to make good progress. As a result, pupils are confident and show resilience in their learning by responding to mistakes with a determination to improve.

- Pupils complete homework regularly. Children in the Reception class produce work which demonstrates their learning in a wide range of subjects. There is clear evidence of their parents engaging with the different activities. Leaders are reviewing the homework policy for the rest of the school as they are aware that homework does not contribute to pupils' progress as well as they would like.
- The teaching of all groups of pupils has improved since the last inspection. However, in some classes and some subjects, the attainment of boys is lower than that of girls. Where this is the case, teachers are focusing more attention on the boys, for example asking more questions of boys to ensure that they understand the work they are doing. Diminishing differences between boys' and girls' achievement are starting to emerge in assessment information.
- The teaching of mathematics has improved this year. Pupils are presented with a better balance of calculation and problem-solving work than previously. Pupils are expected to demonstrate their reasoning skills when working out problems. Variation in the effectiveness of teaching remains between year groups. The most able pupils do not receive sufficiently challenging problem-solving work.
- Teachers do not always make it clear to pupils what they expect to see when pupils explain their mathematical thinking. This is most notable when pupils of all abilities are asked to show how they have tackled problems. Teachers' follow-up checks, to ensure that pupils have answered appropriately, are not as rigorous as they could be. An example where such rigour did occur was in a Year 6 lesson. Pupils understood that they had to present their ideas about how they could calculate the number of ways people could sit around a table in a logical way. The teacher then checked that the pupils' ideas were mathematically sound and so ensured that all possibilities were covered.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

Personal development and welfare

- The school's work to promote pupils' personal development and welfare is good.
- Pupils have the opportunity to take on a range of leadership roles. These include library roles and to lead groups of pupils in their physical education lessons. Pupils recognise how these roles enable them to be involved in improving the school. For example, pupils contributed to the design of the newly refurbished library.
- Pupils feel safe and are kept safe in school. Pupils, parents and staff express positive views about how the school ensures that pupils are kept safe. Pupils understand the dangers of being online and therefore value the work of the school in alerting them to dangers. Lessons include information about what to do, and what not to do, when learning and playing online.
- The school's provision in ensuring that pupils are well cared for is effective. Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are particularly well supported. Last year, parents attended all review meetings for their children. These meetings enabled

parents and staff to agree and implement strategies designed to develop pupils' confidence in their learning. As a result, these pupils are more confident.

- Pupils' physical well-being is promoted effectively. An example of this provision is seen through sporting opportunities. Pupils enjoy their lessons and after-school clubs, which have ensured that those pupils who were previously reluctant to engage in sports are now doing so.
- Staff ensure that pupils know who they can talk to and what to do if they are concerned about something in school. For example, pupils know what actions to take if they witness any bullying behaviour. Pupils realise how bullying affects pupils, and there have been no incidents from the start of the last academic year. Pupils and parents are confident that any incidents would be dealt with well by staff. Such work helps support pupils' emotional well-being.

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good.
- Pupils' overall attendance is above the national average. This has been sustained over the past three years. All groups of pupils attend well and are rarely late coming into school in the mornings. Half of all disadvantaged pupils have 100% attendance this year so far.
- Pupils enjoy their learning because the curriculum encourages them to explore their own interests. For example, at the start of each topic, pupils are asked to pose their own questions about what they would like to learn through the particular theme taught. This approach helps to capture the interest of boys.
- Parents, staff and pupils feel that pupils' conduct is good and improving. During the inspection this was most notably seen in lessons. Pupils listen well to what adults say and then follow instructions dutifully. Disruption in lessons is rare as pupils enjoy their learning and want to get on with their work. When pupils are insufficiently challenged in lessons, their attitudes to learning are weaker.
- The school's work in promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding is effective. Pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain as they gain a good understanding about British values, including democracy and tolerance. There is no evidence of discrimination at Highfields.

Outcomes for pupils

Good

- In 2015, pupils' attainment at the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics was broadly in line with national averages. Pupils made better progress in 2016, resulting in good attainment. In key stage 2, 2015 and 2016 outcomes were similar to those seen in key stage 1. This year, pupils in both key stages are making good progress from their different starting points in all subjects, with reading and writing being stronger than mathematics.
- Disadvantaged pupils attained well in 2015. They performed better than non-disadvantaged pupils nationally, owing to the good use of pupil premium funding. Last year, and currently, this group of pupils are progressing at least as well as their classmates in reading, writing and mathematics.

- The proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard in the Year 1 phonics check has been above the national average in recent years. Reading standards across the school have improved since the last inspection. This success is due to the determined approach taken by all staff to raise the profile of reading.
- Pupils have secured good grammar, punctuation and spelling skills. They use these skills to write well in a wide range of different subjects, including science. As a result, pupils' made good progress in their writing last year, and continue to do so this year.
- Pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress. The leader with responsibility for this group of pupils makes it clear to staff what pupils need to do to make good progress in different subjects. Frequent checks are made by both the leader and staff to see if individual pupils are making sufficient progress. Adjustments are made if needed to ensure that good progress is sustained and any dips are overcome.
- The number of pupils who need to catch up in order to reach expected attainment at the end of each year is decreasing. Teachers have been able to build on pupils' skills as, over the past two years, more pupils have left each year group having achieved the required skills. Pupils who need to make more rapid progress are currently doing so. As a result of this improvement over time, a greater proportion of pupils are well prepared for their move into the next year group and into secondary education.
- The most able pupils include a small proportion of disadvantaged pupils. This group of pupils currently make best progress in reading and writing because they receive work which challenges them well. In mathematics, overall progress by the time pupils leave the school is good but is variable between year groups. Tasks which require the most able pupils to demonstrate their strategies for solving problems do not challenge pupils to think hard. As a result, progress is more restricted than in reading and writing.
- From the start of this academic year, pupils receive an appropriate balance of reasoning and calculation work. This focus helps pupils consolidate their mathematical skills and apply them in a range of problems. Pupils use their mathematical skills well in a range of other subjects, including working out percentages in their topic work.
- Boys' attainment is more variable than girls' in reading, writing and mathematics. Senior leaders are aware of this as they have analysed the achievement of boys and girls well. Teaching strategies are enabling boys to make better progress but are yet to show improvement in attainment.

Early years provision

Good

- Leadership and management are effective. The early years leader has established strong partnerships with parents. Parents provide useful information about their child's interests and progress outside of school. Staff use this information to make changes to the experiences children have in school. As a result, children are motivated to learn about topics presented in the early years.
- Children make good progress from their starting points at the beginning of Reception. Most children enter Reception with skills that are typical for their age. In recent years, boys have not attained as well as girls typically. This means that fewer boys than girls achieved a good level of development.

- Since the last inspection, a greater proportion of children than the national average attained an overall good level of development each year. This is also the case for each area of learning. In addition, a higher proportion than nationally exceeded expectations. Children are well prepared for their move to Year 1.
- Teaching is effective and children understand the purpose of their learning. A group were observed writing shopping lists. When asked why they were doing this, they replied that they wanted to remember what ingredients they needed to collect in order to create a potion later in the day.
- The teacher and teaching assistants are skilled in teaching phonics. They use information about children's progress to plan and deliver activities that will challenge children well. As a result, children make good progress, especially those who are disadvantaged who often have more ground to make up to attain the expected levels at the end of Reception. Disadvantaged children make good progress across the different areas of learning.
- Children behave well and conduct themselves sensibly. They adhere to clear expectations made by staff from the start of the Reception Year. Children display positive attitudes to their learning, enjoying the range of activities on offer. They stick to their activities, being keen to explore their own interests through the activities presented.
- Children are well cared for and kept safe. The early years leader works well with external agencies, including those whose roles are to support parents of children with specific needs. These include speech and language, and autism. As a result of these relationships, children with specific needs make good progress through the early years.

School details

Unique reference number	124211
Local authority	Staffordshire
Inspection number	10012406

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

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	197
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Geoff Elton
Headteacher	Mark Wilkes
Telephone number	01543 510445
Website	www.highfields.staffs.sch.uk
Email address	office@highfields.staffs.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	8 July 2014

Information about this school

- Highfields Primary School is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Five new teachers have been appointed since the time of the last inspection.
- Children in the early years are taught in one full-time Reception class. All other year groups have one class.
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is well below average.
- Almost all pupils come from a White British background. Very few speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium is below the national average.
- The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is below the national average.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for attainment and progress.

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

Information about this inspection

- Inspectors observed teaching and learning in all classes and visited small-group intervention sessions. They visited 14 lessons, three of which were observed jointly with senior leaders.
- Meetings were held with pupils, staff and the chair of the governing body and other governors.
- Inspectors talked to pupils about their reading and listened to both higher- and lower-ability pupils read.
- Inspectors examined work in pupils' books.
- The school's child protection and safeguarding procedures were scrutinised.
- Inspectors observed the work of the school and looked at a range of documentation written to support school improvement, including minutes from meetings of the governing body.
- Inspectors took account of the 39 replies to Ofsted's online Parent View questionnaire and spoke with parents. Inspectors also looked at surveys completed by staff.
- Inspectors reviewed the school's website.

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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